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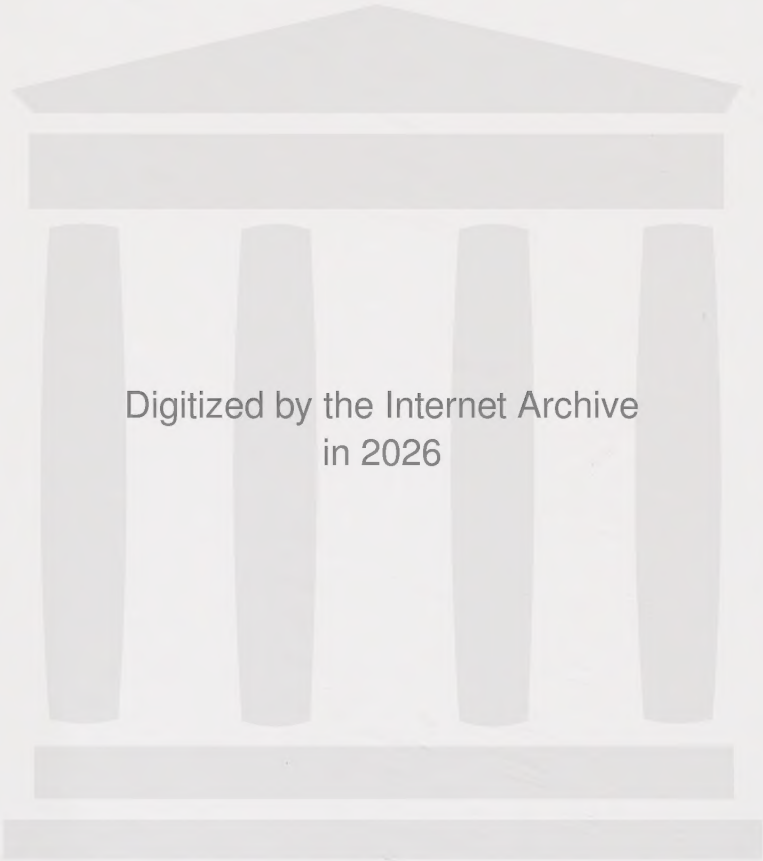
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SPORT AND NATURE IN THE HIMALAYAS.

LT.-COL. P. R. BAIRNSFATHER.

SPORT AND NATURE IN THE HIMALAYAS

By Lt.-Col. P. R. BAIRNSFATHER
(Late 14th Bengal Lancers).

Edited by F. G. AFLALO.

ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE.

STEVENSON, in one of his prefaces, represents the author standing for a moment in the portico, hat in hand and with an urbane demeanour. In offering these little memories of outdoor life in the Himalayas to brother Anglo-Indians, the author feels much more diffident than urbane, and hastens to withdraw from the portico with a plea for leniency towards one who was ever more at home in the jungle than at the desk. He would not, indeed, have obtruded himself at all on so early a page had it not afforded the opportunity of thanking the Editors of the *Scottish Field, Badminton Magazine, Baily's* and *Country Life,* for permission to include some few chapters of the book that first saw light in their pages.

Midsummer, 1913.

INTRODUCTORY.

OFF TO THE HILLS.

IN the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of leave, and certainly all servants of His Majesty whose work is in India realize that a spell in the hills means something more than a mere holiday to anyone, however hard worked, at home. Of course, there as here, it is liberty, but it also is respite from the scorching heat of the plains, relief from the deadly round of the long, long Indian day that someone has described as "Sun in the East in the morning sun in the West at night." Thus to anyone who has spent the greater part of the year in the plains, leave means life. He may have been keenly interested in his work. He may even have been able to derive some sort of enjoyment from such sport and other amusements as are available; but one fact, however we may try to lose sight of it, remains incontestable, that the ordinary Briton is not built for that land, and that, sooner or later, prolonged life in the plains is sure to injure him.

To this it may perhaps be objected that an earlier generation managed to live through the year in the plains in those far-off days when there were no railways to give release. Well, how many of them either succumbed at their posts, or tottered home, only to die prematurely in England? Those in authority know the significance of leave, and recognize its principle as part and parcel of every kind of Indian appointment, and to this all and sundry—soldier and

civilian, moist merchant or toiling missionary—have as much reason to be thankful as to the proximity of the glorious Himalaya as a retreat from the cities of the plain.

I know that most of us began to long for another sight of the snows and scent of the pines as soon as the April breezes were approaching punkah heat, nor was the desire for the freshness and freedom of the mountains lessened by the prospect of long and arduous stalks after sheep, goats and other game of the high tops.

> Go there, go there,
> Where pipes the marmot, fiercely growls the bear . . . ,

sang some poet, and that is a call we ever gladly obeyed, since, though sport must still, even at those altitudes, entail hard work and disappointment, we should at least have the satisfaction of leaving for a little the eternal fight against heat and thirst, and of knowing ourselves in a white man's climate. There is, indeed, a quality so invigorating in that mountain air that even failure, though irritating enough at the moment, is soon forgotten in the exhilaration of one's surroundings. Fatigue, there is, of course, with moments when a man loses his breath and feels as if he could not crawl another yard. Yet a very few minutes bring back all his keenness, and when he gets back to camp, how different is his mood from that of the plains, where the appetite is always jaded and the eye looks askance at every morsel of food, examining it for something that should not be there, and too often having his search rewarded! Even a pipe smokes differently up in the hills, whether after the evening meal, or, better still, while watching the men skin a bear or ibex after a long stalk and a straight shot.

All this is life and makes a man whistle and sing if he can, or even if he cannot. For those who lack the opportunity to enjoy it he feels a pity akin to love; and for those others who have no desire, he feels

that other pity, which touches contempt. Before a man can feel the supreme joy of the mountains, he must leave ten or twelve thousand feet below him, and I think also he should be alone. And, though such sport as is the theme of what follows is to my mind the finest occupation for leave in the hills, it is not essential to enjoyment, for the naturalist, the painter, even the amateur photographer, may revel in opportunities not granted at the lower levels. As for the round of gaiety at a station like Simla, I hold it scarce worthy of mention as a panacea for the tired man from the plains, for it only, after all, amounts to a repetition of the same old social routine in a rather better climate. These hill stations, standing a paltry six or seven thousand feet above the ocean, are not high enough for recuperating purposes. The sun has lost but little of his power, and, if the truth must be told, the sanitary arrangements are too often at fault.

No, the man who wants all that Himalaya can give him must leave these outposts of civilisation far behind him, and must push on until he can camp amid the snows, with the pine forest around or beneath him, according to the season, far from his own kind and remote from even native habitations. Only so can he realize his freedom from discipline and soldiers, from fellow men and women, from post and telegraph, and all the ills of routine down below. There is nothing now for him to think of for many a day but the plan of campaign against bear or ibex; nothing to do but to carry it out. Long days of toil of his own devising are his, and nights of repose free from care. The contrast for anyone fresh from the plains passes the understanding of those not so circumstanced.

Each season in the Himalaya has its own particular charm and its own characteristic features. In spring the snows are still low down, and, as we reach the top of some high pass, there bursts on our view a wondrous scene of purest white, reaching away, billow on billow, as far as eye can see, the higher peaks flushed in the rose of the rising

sun. Or we may find ourselves in the period of the late summer rains, when

Moist, bright and green the landscape laughs around . . .

only with a luxuriance of colour and a grandeur of effect that the poet of the Seasons never dreamt of. Below us roll the valleys, choked with snow-white vapour, ever moving and changing, the birth of clouds.

Or, again, in autumn there is this same effect of dense white mist hiding the lowlands and giving to the higher peaks the effect of islands standing in an ocean of snow. Little by little these wraiths are dispersed by the morning sun, revealing, feature by feature, all the loveliness of the land, till soon the only mist is that which comes from scattered villages nestling among the autumn-tinted woods. At this season the sky overhead is brightest blue, and the air is still and crisp.

Contrast is, perhaps, the keynote of all our most lasting impressions of pleasure and pain, and I doubt whether there is any other country in the world so favourable to the realization of such impressions as India. Plains there may be as hot elsewhere, and hills as high, but where else are the two so be found so near together, and with the same easy means of transit? Railways take the traveller from any point in India to the very foot of the Himalaya, whence he is speedily transported to Elysium in a pony cart, leaving, in three or four hours, dust, mosquitoes and unbearable heat far behind, and finding himself amid pines, or even snow, five or six thousand feet up, where, instead of clothes in any form being a burden, he is glad to wear his great coat and to sleep under blankets. Even those in robust health rejoice in the change. For the invalid, it brings new zest for a life of which he was beginning to tire.

Of course, there is the converse. The ascent was laborious; the descent is easy, but oh, with what different feelings do we return

to the plains ! The evening and the morning have measured the very last day of our leave, and we stand melancholy, with our backs reluctantly turned to the glorious mountains, looking down on the shimmering scene below. Like bathers we stand, hesitating to make the plunge. For we know from experience with what fatal rapidity we shall accomplish the descent. Yet let us be sportsmen, my masters ! We have had our day, and our return to duty will be the signal for some other poor devil to go the way we have come.

And there is always next leave to look forward to.

Sport and Nature in the Himalayas.

CHAPTER I.

SPORTING ANIMALS OF THE HIMALAYAS.

I.—The Goats.

COLONEL WARD, one of the very best authorities on Himalayan shooting, writing in 1896, used doleful language on the subject of latter day sporting possibilities in Kashmir. "The valley," he says, "is nearly cleared of game, and the sportsman's hunting-fields are many marches away." Then comes the more cheering sentence—"But it is possible that things are now at their worst." From later accounts it seems certain that the turning point had indeed been reached, and that not only have brighter days already dawned, but that there is good hope of this fairer prospect being a lasting reality. To the Colonel himself, for many years a permanent resident in Kashmir, are the thanks due for this, he having been the prime mover in securing the establishment of the game laws necessary to the desired end. True, neither Kashmir, nor any other part of the Himalayas can ever again be what they were in the good old days when the country was less easy of access, and sportsmen were few. But every one of the many varieties of animals have at least been saved in time from extinction, and if, as is the case under the late regulations, a licence has now to be paid for, and a limit has been placed on the number of heads allowed to be shot, it may be taken as

certain that fine specimens of all are still obtainable by the man who has the keenness to go through a reasonable amount of work for them. True again, he will have to do a deal of marching, and go far afield, but then what a country to march in, and what a climate! The very toil in such a land, even with fair prospect of only a limited number of the grand trophies he is in search of, must be nothing but a pleasure to anyone who is a man and a sportsman, and built the right way. Such at least is my view; and with regard to this limitation of trophies, I would still claim for the Himalayas, in variety especially, but even in possible numbers also, to say nothing of the superior climate and scenery and comparative comfort of the travelling, pre-eminence as a hunting field over all other regions, with exception only of some districts of Africa. In Africa the desirable animals—desirable, that is, for the beauty of the trophies, as well as for their sporting qualities—are after all chiefly varieties of one great family, that of the antelopes. Whereas in the Himalayas we have of big game no less than four distinct varieties of wild goat, four grand sheep, four deer, one bull, one antelope, and one gazelle, besides two bears and two leopards, all still to be had in reasonable quantity.

In giving some account of these animals and the methods of circumventing them, it is right that the goats should have first place. These are the most numerous, and therefore the best known and most commonly shot, and the fame of one at least may be said to be world wide. This is the Ibex.

A goat? Yes, but such a goat! To the domestic animal, which the name will conjure up in the mind of the uninitiated, he has little resemblance. Although his *general* ways and bearing may certainly proclaim him of the same family, in size and appearance the relationship is as that of a lion to a tabby cat, or a tarpon to a herring. See him as he stands on yon pinnacle of rock, outlined clear against the sky, his horns near to his haunches, sweeping back in massive curve.

Still as the rock itself he stands, yet instinct with life, alert and ready, his watchful gaze bent steadfastly downward, calm and confident in his unapproachable security. To the eye of a sportsman no more glorious and soul-stirring sight than this. Or again, see him dead on the snow. If it be our first experience we at once exclaim at his bulk. Look at his legs and hoofs—more like those of a calf than a goat. And what a revelation are his horns. Then try to lift, or even

TROPHIES.

move, him, and our wonder and respect are doubled—five or six times the weight of our domestic friend, we say, and we may not be far wrong. In life, viewed in the distance among mountains of such vast proportions, there had been no conception of such massiveness; the harmony was too perfect. It required close quarters, and comparison, to bring forth the revelation.

The distribution of the Ibex is far wider than that of any of the

other goats I shall have to mention, or than that of others found elsewhere in the world. He extends from the Himalayas, northward, to the Altai Mountains and the Pamirs, and westward, not only to the Afghan and Persian Mountains, but into Asia Minor and Europe. This distribution naturally entails varieties—in bulk of body and length and massiveness of horn—and all are not so fine as those to be found in the Himalayas. Till more recent years these were, I suppose, unsurpassed, but in these days, if a sportsman be not disposed to be content with a horn under fifty inches (forty and thereabouts is now considered a good head in Kashmir), he must harden his heart, and go farther afield. But there are still many to be had in the Himalayas of these latter dimensions, and up to forty-five inches, and the liberal allowance of six heads is permitted for the season's licence.

Next in order comes the Markhor. But it is from no inferiority in any respect that he is given second place. Far from that, for indeed many men maintain that he surpasses the Ibex, not only in beauty of horns and stateliness of carriage, but also, owing to the difficulty of the ground he frequents, in the interest of stalking and bringing to bag. And a grand fellow he is—fully equal in height, weight and all proportions to the Ibex, and in general appearance surpassing him in the flowing shagginess of his beard, which extends far down his chest. His horns are not a sweeping backward curve like those of the Ibex, but a great, spreading spiral—like that of a cork-screw, but flattened and of a wider proportional twist, there being usually only two complete turns. Measured along the curve they have been known to reach the length of sixty inches. Think of that! This is the Himalayan, the finest and best known variety, but there is another within reach of Indian sportsmen, very distinct from this. His horns may best be likened to an ordinary screw. They shoot up from the head at an angle between the two of about thirty degrees, thick at base, and tapering to a blunt point, a frequent

spiral running round the general straight length. There is none of this species in the Himalaya proper, but they are fairly numerous in the maze of off-shoots extending in a south-westerly direction through Eastern Afghanistan and Baluchistan. It is chiefly the comparatively restricted extent of range of both these varieties that accounts for the fact, if it is a fact, that their horns are more prized as trophies than those of Ibex. I myself have not seen much to choose in the ruggedness of ground affected by these two rivals. In the matter of difficulty and adventure the stalking of either may well content any man. Sturdy limbs, the best of lungs and steady head are required for all.

The general methods necessary in finding and approaching these goats are not dissimilar from those required in the case of other mountain game. But there is just one point, attention to which is of supreme importance in the Himalayas more than elsewhere—in the Scottish Highlands for instance. This is, that they must not be approached from below, and for two reasons. First, they live at such heights, Ibex especially, that they need have little apprehension of danger from above, and consequently their whole attention is ever on the alert for enemies from below. The second reason is connected with the peculiar conditions of the regions they inhabit. Hot sun in the day, and clear skies at night, cause strongly marked changes of temperature. The heated air consequently rises during the day, and a cool current begins to descend at night-fall. The consequence which concerns us being that during the hours of daylight the breeze on all ordinary days is from below upwards, and the reverse at night This will appear to make the stalking a simple matter compared with regions of more variable winds and storms. And this may be so in a degree, but the constancy of the conditions must not be too much relied on. Storm movements do also occur, when the wind will come from some particular direction, causing eddies and confusion with the upward current. And, besides this, there are the indecisive intervals

at early morning and late evening when there is uncertainty as to whether the changes due at these times have commenced. And these are just the times when a stalk is most likely to be in progress. It will be understood then that one great desideratum in the preliminaries for circumventing these animals is to get above them. To have one's actual camp above them is not as a rule a possibility: no level ground available, no fire-wood, no water. So one of two plans has to be chosen. Either, having slept in comfort below for a few hours, a long, rough climb has to be undertaken in the dark, so as to reach the desired elevation before dawn; or else the night must be spent high up somewhere in the vicinity of the game. The last is by far the more preferable plan—far greater certainty of being on the spot at the right time, and less chance of the game being alarmed. Many a cold night have I thus passed, a fire being of course forbidden; and queer, and sometimes precarious have been the only places available for a bivouac. For it is indeed an absolute fact, and often happens, that not sufficient level, or nearly level ground to lie down on is to be found within any reasonable distance of where you must be. A bit of an Ibex track, a foot or so wide, may then be utilized, or some rough levelling with alpenstocks resorted to; but such beds are not particularly "chancy" on a hill-side so steep and smooth that a restless roll over might set one going on a journey with no stoppage for some thousands of feet. But it is all delightful—when you are young, and before such things have passed into the light of too common day. Besides, which, the game is well worth the candle, for once established at such a vantage point the herd may be watched without fear of detection, and quickly followed when they descend to their feeding ground below, or intercepted on their return to the rocks for the day.

Little space is now available for our remaining two friends—the Ther and the Gooral. But these are not so important, the horn

trophies being far inferior. And yet the Ther, his horns apart, is as fine an animal as either the Ibex or Markhor, incomparably finer in the matter of his coat, which, unlike the others, is well worth preserving.

His distribution is somewhat scattered as well as restricted. Few are to be found in Kashmir, but in the mountains to the south-east of that country there are several places where a good bag may be made. He is found at lower elevations than the Ibex and Markhor, but this does not mean that the "going" is one whit less steep or rugged. And I can testify that to bring good specimens of these to bag requires no less patience and skill, hard climbing and general fitness. This means that their pursuit gives equal interest and excitement, and if good horns are only from twelve to fourteen inches, a trophy after all is a good deal a matter of comparison. A good Ther is a good Ther, and variety is what we want.

The Gooral comes nearer the Chamois in general appearance; a much smaller and lighter animal, with horns in proportion—some ten inches or so. He is the only one which may be said to resemble some domestic goats, but even he is much more sturdy. He frequents ground of still lower elevation, but even here there is little to choose in general steepness. And, affording, as he does, a much smaller mark, the shooting is no child's play. They are very numerous in many parts of the outer Himalayas, being often found close to some of the well-known hill stations. No better practice for the novice with ambitious hopes of higher things could be found.

II.—The Sheep.

In the introductory remarks to the horned game of this range, I claimed four wild sheep for the Himalayas. This was perhaps not strictly accurate, as this number includes the Ovis Poli, which is

not found in the Himalayas proper, but on the great high table-land of the Pamirs, to the north of the western extremity of these mountains. Still, broadly speaking, all these elevations are in reality one great mass, and a sportsman in quest of Ovis Poli would usually make his approach to their habitat by way of Kashmir, and over one or other of the northern Himalayan passes.

This is the king of all sheep; his title is indisputable. If in actual bulk of body there may not be great preponderance over the Ovis Ammon, or the American Big Horn, there is no comparison as to the horns. In both size and beauty these surpass all others. No other wild sheep has the fully developed outward turn of the points, which, strangely enough, is yet so well seen on a small scale in some domestic rams. And then the length is so great as to be more suitably measured by feet than inches. One recorded head had, as I recollect, one horn of six feet, and the other six feet one inch! and I myself have seen horns of sixty-eight inches. Trophies, these, surely worth going far to secure; and a far cry it is to the Pamirs, and a hard life in a high and barren land when you get there. Yet this has not deterred sportsmen, and these sheep have been sadly thinned out by adventurous hunters since the country became better known and more accessible some twenty years ago. No great bag, therefore, nor any head perhaps approaching the measurements quoted, need be looked for in these days, yet a man might be well content with something less. An animal of such superlative desirableness to the sportsman might well claim a longer notice than this, but as I have had no personal acquaintance with him, I prefer to pass at once to those others which I have myself shot, and all of which come more strictly under our category of Himalayan animals.

The Ovis Ammon, or *hodgsoni*, is first cousin to the great Poli, and except for length of horn, and the absence of the graceful outward sweep of the points, is no whit less imposing. His haunts and his

habits are precisely similar, and though the country he inhabits is more easy of access, it is no less difficult to obtain a fine specimen. And here I would remark that if, as was pointed out in the case of the goats, the wild Ibex or Markhor from their great size bear but small resemblance to the domestic goats, this difference is still more pronounced in the case of the sheep. For one thing, none of the wild species that I know of, or have heard of, have any wool—*i.e.*, nothing that could be called wool in the least approximating to that of the fluffy animals we all know so well. In the winter season of the higher and colder regions, such as the Pamirs and Tibet, the wild sheep, in common with all other animals, do certainly develop an extra covering of very fine wool. But this is an under-garment, and remains covered and concealed by the outer coarse hair, and it is all shed in summer. So that, but for his horns, the animal, with his light brown back and white belly, might well be mistaken for a deer. Then, in the case of the Ovis Ammon and his near relations of the high plateaus, the difference in bulk, as compared with our domestic friends, is immense. At a distance, and in the vastness of his surroundings this is not, of course, so striking. It is after the first stalk and the first shot have been successful, when we see him at close quarters lying in a limp mass at our feet, that the revelation comes home almost with a shock. Without notes I can make no more than a guess at the weight, but I verily believe that 300, or even 350 lbs. would be no exaggeration. The head alone, with its marvellous burden of horns—forty-eight, or it may be, fifty inches in length, with girth of eighteen inches—I know is as much as a coolie cares to carry to camp. But the ram has to carry it, and does carry it easily and gracefully ; and so it may readily be believed that all else must be proportionally massive, shoulders, haunches, legs and feet. So it may be imagined, too, or rather, perhaps I should say, it may not, how elated and almost overawed I was when, after weary waiting, and long, fruitless searching, I

at last had not one, but two such beauties lying at my feet. And, apart from the actual success, which had come when I had thought all chance was gone, and that my leave and toil had been in vain, never were two more satisfactory shots, or a more dramatic ending to an anxious though easy stalk. But this is another story, on which space considerations forbid me to enter. Sufficient to say that the closest of the two shots was well over 200 yards, and both animals were hit in exactly the right place.

Judging from the familiar stupidity of our domestic friends, it might be thought that a sheep must be an easy animal to stalk. Never was greater mistake. On the contrary, I know of no animal which is more difficult to approach and bring to bag than the Ovis Ammon, and all accounts show that the Ovis Poli is equally wary. The other two species, to which I shall presently refer, inhabit more mountainous and irregular country, which gives greater facilities of approach. But the country of the Ovis Ammon—to wit the great Tibetan plateau—although of very high elevation, has more the character of a plain, undulating with a succession of rolling and more or less rounded eminences; downs it might be called, if it were not for the almost total absence of grass or greenery of any kind, but few casual rocks or boulders either which might facilitate the stalk. Then the sense of smell in this sheep is so great that precautions on this score are doubly necessary, and it is this which often brings to naught the best laid plans. Bad storms are frightfully frequent in this lonely land, and winds changeable; and when once alarmed, the game are off, not slowly like the mountain animals, but at a gallop, not stopping for such a distance that the common illustration of "the next parish" may be a very inadequate description. This at least in the districts hitherto accessible, where they have been much hunted. Now that there seems a prospect of the whole of Tibet being gradually opened to the sportsman, fine specimens should again be far more easily

obtainable, and no doubt in the new localities they would not be so restless and wary.

The next in size to the Ovis Ammon is the Burhel (*O. nahura*), and I think we may put him at about half the weight. He is found in all or most of the steeper and more rugged valleys bordering on or included within the Ovis Ammon country, extending besides to the southern side of the passes leading from the main table land toward India ; and in some parts they are still numerous.

The ground they frequent is as steep as that affected by any of the goats, and their habits being also similar, the methods necessary for stalking are practically the same ; but the ground, though as steep, is as a rule less rugged, affording less cover for concealment in the approach. Like the other sheep, Burhel, too, are, I think, more wary than the goats, and have keener scent, so that it will be understood that there is no lack of interest in their pursuit. What was insisted on in the case of the Ibex refers equally here, and may now be shortly repeated in a sentence. Get above your game as a preliminary, and for two great reasons—the wind blows upwards during the day, and it is beneath them that all mountain animals look for danger. The horns are very peculiar in shape, differing materially from all other sheep. Instead of the backward sweep of the curve, they spring up at right angles to the skull, the curve being straight upwards and outwards, the points again reaching to nearly level with the base, but having a slight backward turn. Instead again of being like those of the other sheep, ridged and triangular in shape with broad base to the front, the Burhel's horns are smooth and nearly round. No domestic sheep (unless it may be a breed in Wallachia, of which I have read) have, I think, followed this pattern.

The last of the category is known as the Oorial in the Punjab, Oorin or Shapo in the Himalayas. Naturalists make a distinction in these varieties, naming the one *O. cycloceros*, and the other *O. vignei* ;

but there is little distinguishable difference, and indeed there seems to be no reasonable doubt that it is the same animal, under slightly varying forms, which we find ranging through Baluchistan, Persia, and Asia Minor, and finally appearing in Europe as the Mouflon in Cyprus and Corsica. As regards India, one noteworthy fact in his distribution is that he has followed the course of the Indus almost from source to mouth, and is found in no other parts of the Himalayas, except in districts bordering on the river or its tributaries, which seems to show that the migration in this instance has been upwards. Except where found in these higher regions of the Indus valley, his habitat is generally speaking of much lower elevation than that of the other sheep; but this must not be taken to mean that it is less mountainous, for he is distinctly a mountain animal, and, as he has a full share of the wariness and restlessness of the other sheep, the stalking of him entails all the toil and patience required for these. He is a smaller animal than the Burhel, but his horns measure about equal length. Thirty inches is considered a good head in most localities, but a fair number have been recorded a good deal over this. In shape they may be called ordinary, *i.e.*, a regular half circle, the curve having a backward inclination with points to the front, but without the additional outward twist as in the Ovis Poli.

So then, in conclusion, let my own convictions be plainly understood—that for the man who, with me, upholds stalking as the best of all forms of sport—no other class of animals could give more satisfactory scope to his energies than those of this sheep tribe, and that the head of a fine old ram from the Pamirs or Tibet is as a trophy unsurpassable in all the world.

III.—The Deer and the Antelope.

It is not to be questioned that with the animals (*viz.*, the goats and the sheep) already dealt with in the first two sections of this

record, the cream of Himalayan sport has been accounted for. And this not only as to quality, but as to quantity also. Not only is the distribution of the deer and antelope far less general, but since the sad diminution in numbers of the Tibetan antelope the total numbers of these two species are not to be compared with those of the goats and sheep, and the difference in quality of sport will be readily admitted. Not that there are any local considerations which make the pursuit of this class of animal any less interesting in the Himalayas than it is in other lands. But the simple fact is that, in my view at least, no stalking in the world can compare with that of the mountain sheep and goats, and so there is nothing derogatory in taking second place to these; and only second place it is. For were it not for the sense of the overwhelming superiority of these other mighty rivals, he would be a fastidious sportsman who would not be well content to go for nothing but the deer. What a happy condition is it, then, that all are obtainable in the same region, with luck, during the same trip to say nothing of bears, leopards, and some minor *Carnivora* to boot. Let me then first make brief enumeration of the classes now to be dealt with, and, according to my estimate, in order of their desirability.

First there must come the great Kashmir stag, well known as the Bara Singh, and so named from a full royal head consisting usually of twelve points, this being the literal meaning of the words. He is practically the same as the red deer of our Scottish mountains, but when compared either as to bulk of body or size of horn, the Kashmir stag has decidedly the best of it. True, our deer often excels in number of points, but it is, I think, questionable if this is an advantage. In my idea an excess of points, these being so often irregularly disposed, is apt to detract from the symmetry. However, let that stand as a point in favour of the Scotchman, remembering at the same time that whereas his length of horn seldom reaches forty inches,

that of his Himalayan rival often exceeds this. As to actual numbers and consequent sport available, I am fain to admit that there may be in these days as many deer in one Scotch forest as in the whole of Kashmir, another decided point in favour of our home product.

Next in order I should put the Tibetan antelope. He is a species quite distinct from the beautiful black buck of the plains of India, not so handsome in shape or colouring, but having perhaps more graceful horns. Though these have not the advantage of the spiral form, they are of much finer make, having a graceful forward curve towards the points, which are very sharp. Altogether a most desirable trophy. As the name implies, this animal inhabits the Tibetan table lands, a vast tract of great elevation stretching from Kashmir in the west to the confines of China proper in the east. Twenty years ago herds of some hundreds, all males, were often to be seen within Kashmir territory, and twenty or thirty heads might have been bagged in a season. But this is all mightily changed, and the reason is very simple. It is the old story of the insatiable and unscrupulous sportsman ranging in a land where there are no restrictions, and possessed by the craze of making a bigger bag than his rivals. No wonder the herds dwindled apace, and many of the survivors took refuge in the fast-closed regions of the forbidden land. Yet, thanks to the new game laws, this has stopped far short of extermination, and no doubt even by now there is a brighter tale to tell than was possible at the time of my visit ten years ago, when I found it hard enough to get half a dozen good heads. Besides this, the restrictions on entry into Tibet proper are now likely to be greatly relaxed, and the great herds of antelope there, as yet hardly touched, will ere long no doubt be available for the adventurous sportsman.

The Tibetan gazelle is a cousin of the antelope, and may well come next. Indeed, in one sense he might be considered the more

desirable of the two. For he has always been rarer, and so harder to obtain, and this in itself is always an incentive to the man who hunts for variety. So the less common animals, equally with the large herds, ever tend to become fewer still ; and it is, I suppose, all inevitable, or would be so without game laws, just as, in the walks of civilised life, morality is sustained more or less by virtue of the policeman. He is a pretty little creature this gazelle, as all gazelles are. About the same size as his cousin of the Indian plains, and, like him, shy and restless without being actually wild. A diminutive mark for the rifle, and coloured like the ground ; so the shot is not an easy one, the aim must be very true, and one must be prepared to shoot quick and perhaps from the shoulder. We must now hark back to a much larger animal, a near relation of the Bara Singh, and every bit as fine a fellow. This is the Sambhur, and the only reason he was not awarded second place, or even equal honours, is that he is very scarce in the Himalayas proper. If we were to include in our range the submontane country—the Siwaliks and spurs of the Himalayas about Dehra Doon and the Terai—the story would be a very different one, and another and very long notice would be required. For here is the real home of the Sambhur, and here also is the true home of the beautiful cheetul or spotted deer, to say nothing of tiger and leopard, elephant and rhinoceros and buffalo, which with swarms of other wild life haunt the dense jungles there. But keeping strictly to the high Himalaya, there is only one district, and that a very circumscribed one, where the Sambhur is to be found. As said, he is a deer bearing a close resemblance to the Bara Singh, but while being of equal bulk of body, in the horns there is an essential difference. These do not fall short in length, and in thickness of beam are generally superior to those of his rival, but then they only have three points on each antler, making the general effect less imposing.

This may be said to complete the category of really desirable

trophies in this class. Two other deer are to be had, and are fairly numerous in some parts, but they are hardly worth consideration except as varieties. These are the musk-deer, and the Khakur or barking deer, both small creatures, about the size of a roe. In Kashmir, such has been the destruction of the former, not only by white sportsman, but also by natives for the sake of the few rupees obtainable for the "pod" of musk, the shooting of these soft little animals is now altogether prohibited. But they are still to be shot in adjacent territories, and their flesh makes excellent camp fare. As trophies, instead of horns, which are absent, one must be content with the long canine teeth projecting from the upper jaw, used for grubbing, as well as (presumably) defence. Unlike the musk-deer, which loves the snow, the Khakur does not go to a higher elevation than 6,000 or 7,000 feet, and, as it keeps strictly to thick jungle, a shot is rarely obtained. Systematic driving for the purpose would no doubt secure a good bag in many places, but as the horns are in proportion to the insignificant body, it is a clear case of the game not being worth the candle, and so it is usually while the sportsman is beating for pheasants that one is occasionally bowled over with a charge of No. 5.

Although I have said that my category was already exhausted, there are yet three other animals which, in default of another more suitable sub-division under which to group them, should have a short mention in this chapter. These are the Yak, the Serow and the Takin. The first will be a familiar name to sporting readers—the great shaggy bull of Tibet, standing from sixteen to eighteen hands, and with hair and bushy tail touching the ground. But he is, alas! almost extinct as a wild animal in the Kashmir portion of Tibet, where alone he was to be met with, at least on ground within British influence, and so his quest is now only for those who are willing to penetrate the wild waste of the central Tibetan plateau. Here indeed they still roam in great herds, and to judge from the tales of the few travellers who have

dared to enter these fastnesses, the slaughter of them might well be a weariness.

The Serow is not common anywhere ; a solitary animal, loving the thick undergrowth of deep forests, and thus seldom encountered. He is the more welcome therefore when found, but this is mere chance work, although tracks are often seen. He is neither a goat nor a sheep, nor a deer, but a nondescript class by himself, in size about that of a fallow deer with horns like those of a domestic goat and about twelve to fourteen inches in length. The Takin is the least known of all Himalayan animals, and this for the reason that his only known habitat is in the mountains somewhere to the north of Assam in a region where it has hitherto been unsafe for a European to show himself. He is said to be an antelope, but has far more the habits and characteristics of a goat. If any man desires a specimen possessed by few other white sportsmen, if by any, this is the animal to go for.

But now we must revert to our first favourite—the lordly Bara Singh, for there is something to be said about his habitat and the method of his hunting which, being in such marked contrast to what we are familiar with in the case of our Highland stags, will have special interest for stalkers at home. The contrast is this, that whereas our Scottish deer roam over wide, bare mountains with nothing higher than heather to hide them, and often congregate in vast herds, the Bara Singh is a forest dweller, loving the dark woods' shade, and seldom to be found in numbers exceeding those of a reasonable family party. This must, it will be seen, entail a vast difference in the methods of procedure towards the desired end—the approach and the shot—and each has its special fascination. Now, of all methods of circumventing animals of this description—stalking in the open, driving, tracking, still-hunting, or patient waiting over drinking pools, salt licks or what not, there can I think be no two opinions as to the undoubted supremacy of the first over all the others. This

is our privilege in the Highlands, and we should be thankful for the fact. It comes very near to Ibex or Ovis Ammon stalking in the Himalayas, and that is the highest praise that can be given. I have tried all the other methods, and found most of them wearisome by comparison. But to my mind there is a signal exception in what I have called still-hunting, and this is the way we usually hunt the stag in Kashmir. He may indeed be stalked also in winter or early spring, when he will sometimes be found in more open parts of the forest. But, for one thing, few men have leave of absence at that season, and besides, the snow is often so deep that progress is a difficult and wet process. Anyhow still-hunting is what I have had experience of, and for me it always had a deep fascination. The rutting, or "calling," season is the only time when this still-hunting may be practised. Deer are not sufficiently numerous to give more than the merest off chance of encounter in the vast pine forests by hap-hazard searching, and without the "call" one might wander for many days without seeing anything but tracks. So it is towards the end of September that the hunter pitches his camp in some likely spot. And he must not be late if he would make sure of his valley. For the unwritten law of the land in such matters gives the right to the first comer for as long as he may choose to remain. This necessity of being early in the field often entails a somewhat wearisome period of waiting before the first "call" may be expected. But fortunately the date of this is variable, so the days may be passed in hope of an unusually early season—the hope that springs eternal, or should do so, and without which a man may not call himself a sportsman.

There it is at last, and our hearts leap at the sound. We would be off at once, but alas! the sound was but faint and far away, and there is hopeless disagreement as to direction, so we must wait on, listening, listening. Minutes seem hours now and patience is sorely tried. For it may well be that no further sound comes till next day,

perhaps not even then. But, yes, there it is, and nearer this time. Can that long wail be meant for a defiant challenge to all who would dare to stay him, or is it a fond love note calling his last year's mate ? More like the latter, we think—a sound of deepest melancholy and black despair it seems, the very negation of hope. We must believe that he has other language also at command more fitly expressive of rapturous meeting when at last attained. But such is not for mortal man to hear. These, however, are after-thoughts. No time now for speculation, and certainly no melancholy, but rejoicing rather is the immediate effect on the hunters. No doubt now of the direction ; and relief from inaction has come. Excitement is intense, but must be suppressed. A noise or any blunder may spoil all. With cautious step, ear and eye alert and strained to utmost attention, we move a little nearer. Anon we halt to listen, with eager gaze trying to pierce the dark gloom of the forest. On again, caution redoubled, and desire becomes intense for one more call. Not a sound, and we dare not proceed further. Minutes again seem hours as we wait, and the stillness and dead silence is almost more than can be borne. Patience at last gives way, and we prepare to move once more, when sudden, and appallingly near, a bellow that turns us to stone and stops our breathing. Yet nothing can we see. But there ! a twig is snapped and look ! just covered by that great tree a form, dim and indefinite. See, he sniffs the air, then paws the ground ; and with the movement all is suddenly clear—the mighty shape and spreading horns that we had taken for a tree branch. What a head, and oh ! how the heart thumps as the rifle is moved tremblingly to position ! But how to still the throbbing pulses for the shot, or how to make sure that no envious twig of the enveloping undergrowth shall deflect the bullet ? But there must be no delay. We know the disaster that that may bring ; a foot may slip, or branch be moved, he may get our wind, or one of the harem may view us from some unsuspected quarter. So,

quickly and accurately as may be, we get the bead straight on chest or shoulder, and the bullet speeds for weal or woe. Such is a fair example of an incident of this sport, and I think none who try it and have success but must acknowledge the fascination. Yet, withal, I am fain to admit that by comparison the open stalk among our Scottish mountains easily "bears the gree."

IV.—The Bears and other Carnivora.

If we exclude the bears, the Himalayas cannot be said to be conspicuous for *Carnivora*. But then I do not know what mountainous country is so, and I think that as many and as great variety will be found here as in any other similar region. The bears are by far the most important, however, both as to numbers and as to quality of sport, and we shall have further appreciative acquaintance with them presently. But it will be well first to make way for this by reviewing shortly the other and less numerous classes.

Of these the most desirable of all for a trophy hunter is the snow leopard, or Ounce—desirable not only, from the sportsman's point of view, for the difficulty of obtaining a specimen, but also æsthetically for the beauty of his skin. But it is seldom indeed that one comes across him. I, personally, have been a round dozen of times on sporting trips to the Himalayas, but never had the luck to see one. Yet, I suppose that, on almost all of these trips I have seen their tracks, and indeed one is often constrained to brand the whole tribe with impotent anathema for scaring the Ibex out of our pet nullah which we had taken so much pains to secure. This shows that they are really fairly plentiful, and no doubt one or two specimens might be obtained by anyone who would take the trouble to make special arrangements to circumvent them; but the fact is this is seldom done. The game is scarcely worth the candle in itself, and so it is

usually when after Ibex or some other of the stalkable game that the spoor, or sometimes the animal himself, is encountered. He is, of course, one of those who walk and hunt by night or in the gloaming, and living at too high an altitude to be able to take toll of the tame flocks of the villagers, he generally confines his attention to the wild herds, be they goats or sheep. During the day he retires, not to jungle, which might be beaten, but to some secluded cave or rock shelf, where the spotting of him is a matter of the merest luck. His distribution is very general over the whole Himalayas, but he seldom comes lower than the snow.

Next in order may come the common panther, or cheeta, the same which is found all over India where jungle is suitable. He does not penetrate to very high altitudes, but may be found anywhere up to 8,000 or 9,000 feet. Unlike the snow leopard, he likes to be within reach of the haunts of men: this for the sake of his meals, and, in fact, it is not too much to say that the staple fare of many of these animals is the flesh of some unwary goat or sheep purloined from the tame flocks which are daily taken to graze in the jungles near the owners' villages. Dogs, too, are a very favourite article of diet, and it is no uncommon thing for some lady's pet to be taken from the very verandah of the house in one of the summer hill resorts, or even seized and borne off from beside the belated rickshaw when returning from tennis of an evening. So bold are they sometimes, and yet by no means easy to bag. The raid and the murder is all done in a moment, and no good in following up then, even if a rifle were handy. The usual plan is to tie up a goat, or even a pariah dog, and sit patiently over him from an hour before sunset till dark, or by moonlight. But these vigils are apt to be long and tedious, many being undertaken in vain before luck comes. Another and better plan is to enlist the co-operation of a village goatherd where some marauder is known to haunt, join him towards evening, and have one of the last of the

flock tied up as the rest are being slowly driven homewards. This causes certain protest and vociferous bleating, and if the sportsman now quietly takes up some concealed position, he will not have long to wait if the depredator is anywhere near that day. Of course beating, too, may sometimes be resorted to, but jungle is usually so general and so extensive that it is not easy to hit off the particular tract in which he may be lying, and so many drives will be blank.

Besides these two *Felidæ*, there is nothing (always excepting the bears) worth the sportsman's thought, that is, unless he may be in pursuit of simple variety in specimens. If this be his aim, however, he may in certain localities add to his collection wolves, wild dogs, jackals, foxes and pine martens. Marmots, too, are very numerous in many places. These last, of course, are not Carnivora, but they have handsome fur, if rather coarse, and afford ideal practice for a pea rifle. Excellent sport may be had in the more level parts of the valley of Kashmir with a "bobbery" pack of dogs in pursuit of the wily fox and wilier jackal. Plenty of irregular ground and rough obstacles to make the "going" of quite sufficient interest. It is chiefly at these lower elevations that the jackals and foxes are found, while the wolves and wild dogs frequent the high upland valleys in the direction of the Tibetan plateau. Pine martens, again, are restricted to the forest tracts. It is only by chance that one may hope to come across them—generally in pairs, and always apparently in earnest quest of something, either running nimbly up and down trees and jumping from one to another like squirrels, or perhaps eager and ruthless on the hot scent of a musk deer. Their skins are well worth having.

Now for the bears. And the first point to remark on is the question whether they have any right to be included in the company of the carnivoræ at all. For although it is well enough known that many bears will eat flesh when they get the chance, and even kill the prey

for themselves, it is also of course a fact that flesh is far from being a necessary of life with them, the great majority indeed never having had this luxury on their bill of fare in their lives. Nor, again, can they be described as either wholly graminivorous, or insectivorous. A combination of these two would come nearest the mark, the diet being changed according to season. In the full bloom of summer and autumn fruits and berries, nuts and grain are their chief delight, this being pleasantly varied with a feast of honey purloined from the wild bees' nests. Then when herbage fails they have resort to various roots besides grubs and insects, lizards and mice, which they rout out from under the great stones scattered on the hill side. And when hard put to it they are even known to catch fish in some specially cunning manner. So, unless we are to class them with ourselves and the swine as omnivorous, it is hard to see where they should most legitimately come in in up-to-date scientific parlance. The old Persians had a simple and, for our purpose, perhaps a more comprehensive nomenclature. *Charinde* were the animals which eat herbs and fruit ; *Parinde,* those which fly ; *Darinde,* those to be feared and so on. The bears would here seem naturally to come under the last category. But then some captious critic might raise the question, " Are they to be feared ? " And this again is a moot point, many sportsmen deriding the idea. True, they are not to be mentioned in the category of tigers or lions, etc. Yet surely it is only a question of degree. Anyone who has seen a full-grown bear skinned could not fail to mark with appreciation, not to say with some awe, the phenomenal development of muscle in the forearm and shoulder ; and the whole form when skinned being so strangely like that of a man, he will be constrained to make disagreeable comparisons, which will at least induce him to admit the possibilities of direful results if that paw should happen to catch him on the side of the head. Nor are evidences wanting that this is the very use the paw is sometimes

put to. One often comes across natives bearing the marks of the long claws, and it seems always to have been the head that has borne the brunt of the assault. These are they who have lived to tell the tale, the others being for ever silent. So I say, let us not altogether despise this our foe for the nonce, let us not be deceived by his somewhat comical look of clumsiness, but observe at least reasonable precautions when at close quarters, and especially when he is wounded, always remembering to keep a reserve shot in the locker for possible eventualities. Another piece of useful advice given by the old hand to the novice is to get above the quarry, and to refrain from firing if he should be directly above you on a steep hill side. Sound advice, no doubt. For awkward as he seems, a bear can come down hill at an astonishing pace, and would not hesitate in this rush, wounded or not, to clear any opponent out of his path with some roughness. These, then, are good precepts, to which I fully subscribe in cold blood. Yet it has to be confessed that my practice was somewhat different in my hunting days, when I, too, was among the scoffers. I cannot recollect ever having hesitation in accepting any shot with thankfulness, whatever the situation, and many a time has the bear, or a whole family of them, been directly above me when the shot was taken. That nothing untoward ever happened may have been sheer good luck, and indeed on two occasions, both strangely similar, there was not much to spare, shikari and self just escaping the headlong downward charge of a wounded bear by throwing ourselves backwards in a most undignified somersault. Yet, although some good stories are made out of less, I do not believe that on either occasion the bear was deliberately charging us; he was simply, as I think, making for some desired retreat, or blindly doing his best to get away from a decidedly disagreeable situation. Both these bears were mortally wounded, and eventually bagged. The assertion, however, that I never hesitated in firing at a bear, has to be qualified in the matter of

one incident, when, with the bead actually on, it was some time before I could nerve myself to pull the trigger. It was a case of a black bear up a walnut tree by moonlight. This manner of shooting is very fascinating, though apt to be distinctly eerie, and sometimes sufficiently trying work. One prowls noiselessly through a grove of walnut or other fruit trees, every now and then halting to catch the sound of a breaking branch, or the cracking of a nut, and peering through the gloom trying to put life into every dark spot that seemed to look blacker than the rest. When a rustle or a crack is heard there is a cautious approach nearer and nearer until we get a glimpse of the dark body, or he takes alarm and is off. On this occasion we were exceptionally successful in the approach, getting eventually right under the very tree in which our friend was enjoying himself. The moon was not very bright, and I could only with difficulty make out the dark shape almost directly above my head, and not twenty feet away and could not at first be at all sure which was head and which tail. As more appropriate for this close work I had my double-barrel shot gun loaded with ball ; so I had a second barrel to rely on, but this (*i.e.*, the left barrel) was choke bore, and I felt very uncertain what the result of a bullet out of this might be. The bear kept wonderfully quiet, and there was all too much time for reflection. I thought of the penalty predicted for those who hesitate, yet the misgivings as to what sort of commotion would result immediately the trigger was pulled had still stronger effect, and, I confess, gave me fearful pause. Once, twice, thrice, did I take careful aim and held my breath, and yet dared not pull off. And I verily believe that had it not been for the sense of the white man's prestige to be sustained in presence of my shikari, I should have slunk away and maintained a discreet silence ever after. But I didn't, and at last believing I had really a clearer view of the spot to aim at, I hardened my heart and blazed away. And what a tremendous blaze and tremendous report it

seemed in the darkness and silence of the wood! And in the middle of and mingled with it all, a loud "whoof," a crashing of branches, and thud of a heavy black body on the ground at my very feet—a body which lay still and harmless. Much to my relief, it need not be said, for it might well have been otherwise. Another year I brought a service rifle with bayonet for this sort of work, but never had an opportunity of putting the idea into practice.

There are two distinct kinds of bears in the Himalayas, the black (*Ursus torquatus*), and the brown, red or snow bear (*Ursus isabellinus*). From five to six feet is the usual measurement of either variety, the black being on the whole the larger. Individuals of both often exceed these dimensions, however. I myself have shot a male red bear which measured slightly over seven feet, and I have heard of a black one of eight feet. But these are the giants, and it may be noticed how closely these measurements correspond to the height of the human subject, which makes the general resemblance previously noted the more noticeable. They are behind us in evolution, however, the male bear still retaining a considerable superiority in size over the female. The skin of the red bear is a beautiful trophy, long hair, soft and thick, lighter or darker according to elevation and season, those shot high up in early spring having quite a silvery sheen. The hair of the black is much coarser and also shorter; consequently he is not so much prized for this consideration, but he is reckoned a more truculent customer to deal with, and so presumably more sporting. Both varieties are still quite numerous in some parts, though the best ground of all— Kashmir—has been woefully shot out of late years. Here, where twenty years ago a dozen bears might easily have been bagged by one man in a month, so persistent has been the pursuit that it has become necessary to take them under the protection of the new game laws, the number permitted for one rifle in a whole season being now limited to two. But there is no restriction

as to black bears. Game laws have not yet been introduced in any other part of the Himalayas, and it is still possible to find localities where there is a fair show of red bears, while the places are many where the black variety are very numerous. Although the black bear may be found at elevations of 10,000, and even up to 12,000 feet, his usual haunts are considerably lower, and he is consequently far more of a jungle animal than his red brother. Driving therefore may be often resorted to, this sometimes being the only way of getting a shot. With the red bear, on the other hand, as also with the black when found at the higher elevations, the great fact that makes them such an asset in Himalayan shooting is that the usual method of circumventing them is by stalking. You spot your quarry far off on the hill side with field glass or telescope, just as you would an Ibex or other mountain animal, and lay your plans for approach in the same manner as for these. And they are often on ground just as steep and rugged so that there is a similar fascination in this respect. The bears are somewhat stupid certainly, have very poor vision, and are lacking in general wariness ; but their senses of smell and hearing are as keen as those of almost any other animal, and so if one is for a moment careless about the wind, or a false step be taken at the wrong time, all previous pains will be in vain at the very last. Then, if we have not forgotten the revelation of that fore-arm and paw, there must always be some little fillip of excitement when we come to close quarters. Yet I have heard many men deride the sport as too easy. I can only say I have not found it so. I have had many a futile stalk and some real excitement, and altogether I consider that without the bears Himalayan sport would lose a great deal of its general charm. When success after Ibex has been long delayed, and body and spirit are weary with hope deferred, how often has news of a bear sent a thrill of renewed life into the flagging limbs, and his death given fresh energy for further effort. Most Himalayan sportsmen must, I think,

have experienced something of this at one time or another, yet in their enthusiasm for the higher sport this aspect of the gratitude due to the bear is often forgotten. Then there is one more thing to remember. A man will soon find out on his return that by all his lady friends the bag will be appraised far more by the number and quality of the bear skins than by all the heads of "silly old goats," be they records or not, by which he sets so much greater store—a consideration surely not to be trifled with.

So I hope I have made out my case for the bears, and, as a conclusion I would only point out that if these require special pleading of this sort, the excellence of the other Himalayan sport is shown up all the more prominently.

V.—Sport for the Shot-Gun.

It is not to be supposed that, in the higher rugged mass of the main Himalaya, there could be much opportunity for the shot-gun. In fact, there is not. Above the forest line, the steep crags and rocky slopes afford little food and no amenities for game-birds, and even if they were there, a glance at the ground would be enough to realize that their pursuit would be altogether too heart-breaking. Some few, indeed, may be met with even here. Flocks of blue-rocks, almost white at these altitudes, may be scared from some steep cliff-side; the weird cry of the snow pheasant may be heard among the rocks of the highest passes; and that finest of all the partridge kind, the Chukore, so plentiful in many localities lower down, finds his way to some of the highest uplands; while hares may also be found up to 15,000 feet in various directions. But withal, shots in these high regions are but few and far between, and are, for the most part, necessarily confined to the "pot" description; so that, indeed, few sportsmen who know the game think it worth the candle to carry a

shot-gun at all. It is for the wild goats or sheep that they have come so far and so high; and besides the scarcity of small game, there is the consideration of being tempted to take, at the wrong time, a casual shot that may offer, with the possible result of needlessly alarming the nobler quarry.

Descending to lower altitudes, however, we shall have a different tale to tell; and the lower we go, the better will be the conditions and the actualities. First will come the high forest region—vast areas of noble pines, with ferns and other undergrowth becoming more luxuriant as we descend. This belt may be put as extending from, say, 10,000 to 7,000 feet, and this is the home of a variety of pheasants. Nothing else, and it is not to be expected that such great stretches of wood could be stocked to anything like the extent we see in our home preserves. Yet in some localities the numbers of one or other variety to be seen—out feeding of an evening, or casually flushed by the way-side—shows clearly that there is no lack; and at first sight we think that all conditions for grand sport are here. But we have forgotten to reckon with the size of the forests, and their unbroken extent, and all our attempts to organize a satisfactory drive are foredoomed to practical failure. A bird or two may be got, but no bag, and so the sport is little resorted to. Yet what possibilities there are. The matter, taken up systematically, a little, or rather perhaps a good deal of, money expended, the forest divided into sections by suitable rides —in a word, the formation of preserves under control and supervision —this is all that is wanted to open up a quite new field of first-class sport to the enterprising man in search of variety. Might there not be even money in it? In such wise did I use to speculate by my lonely camp fire, and possibly the dream may come true some day, and we, or a future generation, may yet see advertisements of shooting boxes to let amid the finest scenery and in the best climate in the world. But this is unwarrantable digression. What manner of pheasants are

these then that would justify such speculations? They are various, and not all equally sporting. But if it were only on account of one of them, the dream might be well warranted. This is the Monal, and fortunately he is, in most places, by far the most numerous, beside being the most widely distributed. He is the first we meet with as we descend—*i.e.*, he goes higher up than any of the others, but at the same time has a wide range downwards, though never coming below the main pine forests. A beautiful bird, but differing essentially from our own and most other pheasants, in that he has not the long tail, In shape, and also in size, he comes nearer the blackcock, but is incomparably superior to him in splendour of plumage. He has not the graceful outward curve of the tail feathers, but instead a striking contrast of colouring comes in—a short fan-shaped spread of light-brown feathers, with a dazzling white patch above, disclosed only when on the wing. With the body plumage a wonderful sheen of glossy dark green, running into and blending with a glittering dark peacock blue on the neck, it may be imagined what a splendid flash of colour he makes as he shoots down hill or across a valley, in the bright sun of these regions. And he *can* fly. Our own rocketers are not, I know, to be despised, especially with a wind behind; but they are not in it with the Monal, assisted as he is by the power of gravity for he always flies down hill, and his hills are very steep. Would that he might be added to our own game-birds, but perhaps he would pine and die from acute nostalgia, under the influence of our cloudy skies and rough weather; or we may have no woods big enough for him. Next, from a sporting point of view, should I think, come the *Coklas* —a pheasant in general shape and size, much like our home one, but falling far short in brilliance of colouring. Yet, though the prevailing hue is only a glossy black and grey, picked out with white, he is a handsome bird and a good sporting flyer. The *Kalij* is still more sombre of plumage—a sort of dark brown, running to purple, as I recollect.

But he is a good game-bird, flushes well, and, like the Monal and Coklas, is excellent for the table. His habitat is lower down than all others, where the woods and jungles are more open and broken, and so more controllable ; and as this variety is also often very numerous in places, it is of them that the best bags may be made. Besides two varieties in the south-eastern Himalaya, of which I know nothing, there are still two others, in the north-west—the *Argus* and the *Chir*. Both these are large and handsome birds, the former being as brilliant in his own golden speckled style as the Monal himself. But both are inveterate runners, and so not to be extolled except for the pot.

So, now, let us go down another thousand feet or so, and this will bring us to two distinct kinds of ground, as developed by the conditions of different locality. On the one hand, steep, grassy slopes, relieved by sparse patches of scrub and many outjutting rocks ; and in other parts again, though of about the same or somewhat lower elevation, great stretches of irregular hills, thickly covered with low jungle, interspersed with more ambitious trees. This last is the home of the pea-fowl, the jungle-fowl, and, to a lesser degree, of the black partridge, and among these quite excellent sport may be had. It may be thought that a peacock could hardly give a sporting shot, and men who have had experience in the plains of India only will probably confirm this view—correctly enough, perhaps, for here the birds are half-tame, and the conditions are all against a long flight in which to get up the pace. But it is all different from this among the hills, and I can testify that it is more than possible to miss clean a rocketing peacock as he shoots down from some high spur, with perhaps two or three hundred yards of "go" in him. When this shooting is varied with jungle-fowl in the same beats, a man would be fastidious if he did not admit it really enjoyable sport. The black partridge is, in my view, as to plumage, the handsomest of his tribe ; a fine sporting flyer, too, generally shooting high up before taking his

flight ; and so, when found in numbers, nothing better need be desired. But such are not the conditions in the tracts under notice ; in fact, not in the Himalayas. Although their peculiar cry is constantly heard among the thick jungle of the peacock and jungle-fowl, they are hard to flush here, and very few find their way into the bag.

The steep, grassy slopes referred to as being about the same elevation as these jungle tracts—*i.e.*, from about 8,000 to 5,000 feet—are the home of the Chukore, already mentioned as extending also to much higher regions, and here it is that, with good arrangements, sport of the very best may be had. The Chukore is a large partridge, having distinct affinity to the red-legged variety, but altogether a handsomer bird. He has, it must be confessed, quite equal powers of running, but there is no real difficulty in flushing him, and certainly none of his family can surpass him in speed and strength of flight. It may well be that, as I have often reckoned at the time, one may have to aim a good four, or even five yards in front, and your bird may be picked up a quarter of a mile away down hill ; for, like all other game-birds found among steep hills, the habit is to dart downwards, and it is gravity, not wind, that gives the impetus. Bearing this in mind, the best method of ensuring a bag is, according to my experience, as follows ; and it may be said that, unless some such plan is adopted, you may break your heart chasing the coveys over these steep hills —far steeper, it must be understood, than the grouse shooter has much experience of—with very little result. Having selected your tract of country, then, the first thing to be done is to secure three or four really trustworthy men — men, that is who understand the game, and take some interest in the result. These are first employed the previous day, or even for some days in advance, in locating the coveys—not a difficult task, for the birds have a convenient habit of revealing their whereabouts by their cockling cry, which reaches a long way in the clear, still air of morning or evening. From the reports of these

men the general direction of the day's operations is then settled, and the subsequent procedure is as follows :—A couple of the sharpest of the men are sent forward along the heights to post themselves on successive high points of vantage, from which the best views may be obtained. The duty of these is to mark where any covey or birds may alight when flushed, so that these may be followed up without undue loss of time. The irregularities of ground will, it will be found, usually prevent the shooting party from doing this for themselves, which explains the special utility of the precaution. This being arranged (probably the night before), the start next morning should be early—this not only in order to get in the most possible amount of work before the sun gets too hot, but also because it is only in the early morning that the birds are on the move and cockling. One or two coolies are now sent along the higher ground, while the guns take a lower and parallel course along the face of the slope. It will not be long before a covey is located. This will, as a rule, take to cover —scrub or long grass—while the guns are still some distance off. These now post themselves, as quickly as may be, below where the birds were seen, while the coolies flush them from above. In this manner one covey after another is sought out and circumvented, and if substantial toll be not exacted, there must have been some flaw in the powder. Then will come the following up of the scattered birds, and here will be found the real labour of the day. For these hills, as explained, are no joke, and the sun will now be hot. An interval will ensue for breakfast, and perhaps a siesta in some shaded spot for an hour or so. This is not laziness, but prudence, for the birds will not be in evidence again before evening, and our energy will not be wasted, but conserved. The return to camp may be by another route, or over the same ground, and even if the latter, there will be good hope, for many birds will have broken back, and will be collecting and again calling ; and we shall probably find that it is darkness and not want of

birds that forces us to call a halt at last. In a good district, ten, fifteen, or even twenty brace might be accounted for by two guns in a day, and verily I have little sympathy with the man who would not call that sport of the best. One other thing also I know, that I have not yet met the man who will crave for more exercise after such a day, or who will not revel, as he never did before, in an easy chair and a long drink at the end of it.

Woodcock may be met with in many parts of the Himalayas. You may often see or hear them flitting over your camp in the gloaming, but there are few places which lend themselves to any chance of success in getting at them. Some few, however, there are, notably the Kulu Valley, north of Simla, where quite respectable bags are occasionally made.

It now only remains to make brief mention of the duck, geese, and snipe, for these we have also in the Himalayas. True, if we except the Tibetan plateau, which is dotted over with stretches of water of varied size, and for the most part salt, the Himalayas are singularly destitute of lakes or marshy ground. Consequently, there are few water birds ; but there is one notable exception in the great Wullar Lake, in the centre of the Kashmir Plain. This, if not the home of birds, is at least the resting-place for the vast flocks of migrants coming from breeding-grounds further north in the autumn, and returning in spring. Hence, at these seasons it is crowded with sporting water-fowl—geese and ducks of every kind ; and the marshy ground round the edges holds plenty of snipe. It is a large expanse of water, however, and there is little cover for the ducks, so that large bags of them are not to be made. The usual tactics with boat and punt-gun have to be resorted to ; unfortunately, I, like others fettered by trammels of expiring leave, never found time to give them a fair trial. Still, the ducks and geese were there in thousands, and no doubt they must be a valuable asset in the sporting programme of the few permanent

residents in the happy valley. A variety in method of snipe shooting here practised is to shoot from a small dug-out. The snipe often take refuge among the lotus plants, sitting on the top of the broad floating leaves, and this is the only way to get at them. The small boat is no very stable platform from which to fire, and a very slight lurch or change of equilibrium would mean an upset and a ducking; which possibility of mishap, it surely need hardly be said, serves only to make the game more worth the playing, on the sound old principle of all good sportsmen, that

No game or sport is worth a rap
For a rational man to play
Into which no accident, no mishap
Can possibly find a way.

CHAPTER II.

MEMORIES OF MARKHOR AND IBEX.

SOMETHING was said in the last chapter of the appearance, habits and distribution of both these wild goats of the Himalayas, and I must now recall a few experiences, some less successful perhaps than instructive, of encounters with both in those far-off, well remembered days, when a long leave in the hills touched life's crowning ambition.

Many attempts I made to add a really good head of Markhor to my collection, but somehow the fates always seemed against me. Thus, on the first occasion of all, as I well remember, I was well on the way to Gilgit, turbulent country in those days, but the best of all ground for this game, when tribal disturbances on the frontier led to my being summarily turned back. Some years later I got another chance, and once again turned my steps towards this desirable region, this time, with the whole country to myself, confident of success. Alas! My dreams of more than one fine head were slowly but surely dispelled. True, I soon bagged several of medium size without much difficulty, but, though I toiled my hardest, searching out every possible corner, my time was within three days of expiring before I even set eyes on one of the right sort. A grand old patriarch he was, and, with his following, I found him in what seemed an ideal spot for a stalk. So we went quietly to work, and came so near success that, could I have got ten paces closer, he would certainly have been mine. Then came a sudden change in the fickle wind, and when we reached

the spot the herd had vanished from sight. A feeling of limp collapse, with all my hopes thus shattered, was quickly followed by new hope, as I suddenly saw the herd again far on the other side of the deep ravine. It seemed just possible that the bullet might reach, and, with a hasty, but careful glance along the sights, I took the shot. Down came the big fellow, rolling to the bottom of the steep slope he had just climbed, and my shikari, with a whoop, ran forward, leaping and scrambling towards his victim with knife ready for the final stroke. Full of quiet content, I was just getting out my pipe when a shout from below apprised me that the cup had once again been dashed from my lips, for the Markhor was up and off, going his best pace, showing no sign of having been hit, and quickly out of reach. We followed as best we could, but all to no purpose. Many years later I was once more after Markhor, this time in a place well nigh shot out, but still known to be the preserve of one hoary old fellow with horns of fabulous length, that had eluded every sportsman who had visited the nullah. It was with a feeling of scepticism that I went in pursuit, but sure enough we did come on the tracks of an animal of unusual size, though, after a search that lasted for several days, we had eventually to give it up as hopeless.

An equally doleful experience with Ibex came my way on one occasion when, within two days of the end of my leave, when I must once again move sadly down and homeward, we sighted four grand fellows on good ground, an apparition that brought confidence in place of the despair that had filled me a moment earlier. The first thing to do was to climb some two thousand feet, over steep, rough ground, in order to get a commanding position overlooking the surrounding country, and all would, no doubt, have gone well if I had not, as ill luck would have had it, been seized with an unusual fit of sudden and overpowering sickness that left me prostrate. It seemed as if I should never reach the top, and I had no choice but to take long rests, lying on

my back or face, the whole way up. Indeed, as soon as I reached the summit, there came the worst attack of all, and for the moment I succumbed to it and fell asleep. Far on in the day I awoke refreshed, but with a feeling of shakiness that later proved fatal to my aim. An order had been left for bedding and food to be sent up, so strong was my determination not, if possible, to return empty-handed, but this seizure made it imperative to go back to camp. Nothing had been seen of the Ibex since we gained the top, and when we got down to a point below which it seemed impossible that we should encounter them, the rifle was put back into its cover and our vigilance was relaxed. Sure enough, at the next corner we came face to face with all four of them, inconceivably close to where we stood and presenting a perfect mark. In vain I hissed an order for the rifle! The cover fitted tight, and hours seemed to pass before I had it in my hand. All this time the Ibex, no less amazed than ourselves, were standing stock still, and only just as I was ready to fire did they begin to move. Weak and shaky before, my whole body was now trembling, and it seemed ages before I could get a bead on the nearest. I thought the aim was true, but the animal bounded down hill and disappeared. One wild shot I took at the rest, hopelessly wide of the mark, and now, though the herd was still within easy range, a cartridge stuck fast in the breech! With what sensations, tugging and straining helplessly at the lever, did I watch them disappear! Such words as would even approximately convey my sentiments at the moment are best unprinted. Slowly and sadly we turned in search of the animal first fired at. Surely I could not have missed at that point-blank range! No; at least there was blood spoor, but darkness was upon us, and the Ibex was nowhere to be seen. In deep dejection I returned to my tent. There was as yet no sight of the bedding and food, and, to make matters worse, it began to snow! Yet happier moments were in store, for the missing refreshment and bedding eventually turned up,

and after a good night's rest we did, as a matter of fact, find our first Ibex dead at no great distance. This was something, to be sure, but oh ! the memory of those other three within a stone's throw !

It is more pleasing on the whole, to recall my first Ibex. First impressions are strongest, and I fear that I have reached that time of life at which the mind reverts to earlier times with far greater readiness and accuracy than to episodes of more recent occurrence. Thus I can remember, as if it were yesterday, my first sight of Kashmir, with each of the eleven marches from Murree to Baramoolah, whence the rest of the journey was performed by boat. I can recall every incident of the paddling, towing and poling up the great river, the camp in the Moonshee Bagh, and all the preparations for a fresh start from that point. What keen interest we felt in every detail in those days ! What delightful anticipations, what extravagant dreams of the bag invaded us the first evening out ! When going to Kashmir after Ibex, the first requisite is to secure a good nullah. Once your tent is pitched in it, etiquette secures it for you until you leave, and, of course, you may not intrude on the preserve of another man in the neighbourhood. This arrangement, though inevitable, often entails a long and desperately cold interval of waiting until the snow has sufficiently gone from the steep slopes to allow of stalking in safety. There is in most seasons such a rush of eager sportsmen, all anxious to secure the best available ground, that he who does not want to be cut out of the running must start early and march his hardest. Thus it even happens that there may be quite a race for some famous nullah, and more than one trick has been practised to outwit a rival, such as passing him in the darkness, or sending on a small tent in charge of lightly laden coolies to be pitched in advance. Occasionally a battle royal has even been waged between two sahibs, the nullah going to him who could hold it. But this was rare.

On this occasion my nullah was to have been the Suknar, just

over the Zoji La Pass, at the head of the Scinde Valley. A friend had strongly recommended it to me, as well as a good shikari, one Aziz Khan, and as my informant had great experience of such matters, I was satisfied. The Suknar is a very high, and in consequence very late, nullah, and as we found no competition for it so early in the season, Aziz Khan induced me first to try another place called Ranga, a few miles only from the pass. A sharp look-out was, of course, kept for any other sahib visiting the neighbourhood with felonious intent, but I may as well confess that these precautions failed, for I was outwitted, the Suknar going to another man, and a globe-trotter at that! However, I had my share of sport in Ranga.

It was not long before we spotted Ibex, including a fine old male, carrying horns with that grand curve which is a sure sign of length, as well as a small herd of females and youngsters. At first sight it looked, at any rate to my way of thinking, that the stalk was going to be a simple affair, but a nearer approach and more systematic inspection of the ground produced a contrary impression which proved correct. The herd occupied a small promontory, or bluff, jutting out with a downward slope from a lofty precipice, and, humanly speaking, inaccessible, since every side of the bluff was a perpendicular cliff. Indeed Aziz Khan, who knew all the ground around, pronounced these cliffs absolutely impossible of ascent, and declared that we had no choice but to wait for the herd to move. So I amused myself with looking at our friends' horns and picturing them safe on the wall of my bungalow, and, as circumstances turned out, I had ample time for these and other reflections, for evening came and still the herd showed no sign of shifting its position, so I sent for food and blankets and prepared to make myself comfortable for the night. This, however, was no easy matter, for not a square yard of level ground could we find on the spot, and I would not hear of moving far. Eventually we had to make shift with an old sheep track, about twelve inches wide,

certainly a precarious bed, for the gradient of that mountain side was alarmingly steep, and if a man once started rolling in his sleep, there was no saying where he would end!

Next morning the herd was still in possession, and seemed quite content with its quarters, as there was a little grazing on the promontory and scarcely any within sight elsewhere. During the day some diversion was created by the appearance of another fine Ibex, which, after a kind of stage fight with the big fellow of the herd, a performance which seemed to me utterly lacking in purpose, though not ungraceful as a spectacle, it joined the party amicably, and suggested a second pair of horns for my bungalow. Still they showed no signs of moving, and another night was upon us. One more day, indeed, we spent in the same manner, watching and waiting, and then I put my foot down and insisted that we must scale the cliff next daybreak. Aziz Khan protested that it was out of the question, but I would have no more delay, and so we started. It certainly proved a bad climb, the rifle and alpenstocks having to be passed from hand to hand, each climbing from point to point with the assistance of the other, and in some places there was next to no hold for hands or feet. Indeed, had it not been for one of our coolies, the best cragsman I ever saw, a man who would spring lightly on the merest point of rock without the thought for the abyss yawning below him, I doubt if we should have done it, and Aziz Khan, good man though he was, protested the whole time that nothing would induce him to return the same way. However, we got to the top at last, and then the shot was an easy one. I got a shot at fifty yards and trembled with delight as I saw my first Ibex on the ground. It ought, indeed, to have been a simple matter to bag the other male, but this was an adventure of early youth, and the excitement was too much for me. With heart thumping, pulses throbbing and every limb quivering in a manner beyond control, I blazed away, missing the male, and disgracing myself

by shooting a young one, which was, I hope, very close to it, though I was certain of nothing just then. After skinning and beheading the prize, we had to think seriously of getting back to camp. Darkness would be on us in an hour, and as snow had already begun to fall, and we had no blankets with us, we made anxious search for a way out. None, however, could we find except the way we had come, and we were of one mind in preferring the alternative of staying up there for the night. Fortunately there was a single small tree on our plateau and under this we made our bivouac, cutting some of its branches for our fire. Slices of the ibex, cut small, were run on sticks and roasted, and this fare had to suffice for the evening meal ; but there was little sleep for us that night, for we had no covering, and it never ceased to snow, so that, with one side warm and the other all but frozen, the experience was sufficiently unpleasant, and my only solace was the bagging of my ibex. We ought, no doubt, to have caught our death of cold as the penalty of such recklessness, but somehow resistance to such conditions comes with the occasion, and we were none the worse.

Next morning, as we were once more seeking a way out, a coolie turned up from my camp, and his appearance was hailed with acclamation. When, however, we bade him show us the way down, he vowed that the sahib could not go the way he had come, but would have to return by the cliff climbed the day before. This, as may be expected, we would not hear of, so he had to show us his own way, which, if not easy, at least proved practicable, and we were soon back in camp, though none too early, for it now came on to snow in earnest, and I was, in fact, storm-bound in my tent for the next two days. On that trip I subsequently added to the bag two red bears and one black, and, after being twenty days out, I returned to work badly bitten with the fever and full of plans for the following year. Aziz Khan, in taking his leave said,

" Salaam, Sahib. I hope your honour may come many times to

this country, but do not, I pray, ask me to be your shikari again. I must think of my family ! "

Some years afterwards I met a nephew of his, and he told me that his uncle still recalled our adventure with that first ibex of mine.

I must conclude these ibex memories with the story of two good heads that are somehow mixed up in my Himalayan retrospect with certain sapphires. And this is how it came about.

Ram Deo, my Kashmiri shikari, stood before me, cunning gleaming from the beady black eyes set close together in his broad Tartar face.

" What are you chattering about now, senseless one ? "

" Nothing, Sahib. We were only saying that no one can get over the Pass now."

" But did I not hear some mention of sapphires ? What do *you* know about them ? "

" Oh, Sahib, I myself know nothing, being but a poor man, but some people from this side, wicked thieves and men of no faith, used to steal over that Pass and bring back sapphires from the mine. And many of the stones were of great size, and . . ." here his voice sank to a hoarse, avaricious whisper—" black, black ! But all that is past. The Pass has become very difficult, and the Kashmiri guards on the mine keep too sharp a look out."

I was angry with Ram Deo. It was solely on his recommendation, made when I had met him the year before, that I had been lured to the nullah. His promises of ibex had been dazzling but unfulfilled, though I had taken great trouble to get to the spot by an unfrequented route in time for the cream of the shooting early in the season. Worse still, I had rashly made promises which I would not lightly have failed in. But Ram Deo and his nullah proved a snare and a delusion. For a fortnight I had worked unremittingly, exploring every corner and every cliff with no result, and there was not even so much as a fresh

track to give us hope. Relations between me and my shikari had in consequence become strained, nor did it improve my temper to hear the old fox, at a moment when my own thoughts ran entirely on our failure to find the ibex, calmly chatting away with his underlings on matters quite irrelevant. Touching the sapphires, however, I was inclined to be more lenient, for time had been when I was a prey to similar temptation. Some years before my tent had been pitched in the vicinity, right opposite a fresh landslip, and only on my return from the trip had I learnt that it was this landslip that had first revealed the mine and the sapphires. What an opportunity! For the mine proved to be no myth, and from it the Kashmir Government had since reaped a steady and considerable revenue. I never quite forgot that outrageous turn of fortune, which might, with better luck, have been the tide in my own affairs. That, however, was quite a another story, and I said as much to Ram Deo.

"No, Sahib," he made answer. "I know your lordship does not come here for sapphires; doubtless your honour has enough of these. But it is quite true that there are plenty of ibex here as well. Everyone knows it. What has gone wrong this year, Heaven only knows, but if your Highness will stay a little longer and perhaps shoot a crow, we may see them to-morrow."

This last desperate resort was not unknown to me, as I had heard it advocated elsewhere in the Himalayas.

Ram Deo, though somewhat of a rogue, was perfectly sincere in his optimism, and, like others of his trade, could not bring himself to realize the sad falling off in game since he was a young man. On my arrival he had been jubilant. We had only to climb the opposite hill to find ibex. A herd had been seen only the day before, close to his own village, and there would be any quantity at the head of the nullah. And so on, and so forth, and the worst of it was that his enthusiasm had infected me also. During the ensuing days, however,

Ram Deo's certainty had slowly given place to doubting hope, and he would occasionally have recourse to mysterious incantations and queer antics with hands and fingers by may of exorcising the demons of our ill-luck. Simple fatalist that he was, he probably believed that the ibex would suddenly be materialised from nowhere, but such transports were beyond me, my faith, and hope were gone, and the same might, so far as Ram Deo went, be said for my charity. Worst of all, my leave was nearly gone too. So I would not even shoot the crow, but sternly gave the necessary orders for the reluctant return to the plains. Camp was struck next morning, and I was marching sadly along, thinking of the reception in store for me after those promises, which would now seem but idle boasting. Then, as sometimes happens when things look their blackest, the luck turned, and news of ibex came at last.

To us entered a traveller from below who had just seen them with his own eyes—might his head be cut off if he spoke not truth! As, however, the herd was some ten miles distant down the nullah, there was clearly no time to lose. Stepping out, we soon covered the distance, and found that the report was actually true this time. There they were, feeding quietly up the opposite side of the valley, and not very high; three fine males, with some females and young. Yet the heads were by no means mine for the asking. The hill looked more steep and rugged than usual, consisting of a series of sharp ridges forming the boundaries of steep nullahs that ran transverse to the main valley and all of them full of snow. Evidently the going would be stiff. The stalk could not occupy less than an hour, and, once we got started, no more would be seen of the game till we were close to it. Ram Deo was all for starting at once, pretending that he knew the spot at which the ibex would drink before lying up for the day, and insisting that they had no choice but to return by way of a certain cliff where, if we took our stand, we must get them one by one. It looked a cunning scheme,

but it did not attract me, and I thought it would serve our purpose better to wait and watch, so as to see, if possible, the line the herd seemed likely to take before we risked losing sight of them for so long. Perhaps, too, I welcomed the opportunity of laying stress on my want of faith in Ram Deo. So we called a halt, and I made a light breakfast, meanwhile examining the distant horns through my glasses. As events proved, we did well to wait, for presently the ibex took quite a different course from that expected, and if we had proceeded on Ram Deo's tack, we should never have set eyes on them again. Their goal was beyond all doubt the higher and less accessible cliffs. It was high time to be up and doing, and it looked very doubtful, indeed, whether we should ever come up with them at all.

That was a grand climb ; first about a thousand feet down to the bed of the main nullah, then up the opposite side, another fifteen hundred. There was no time for hesitating at difficult or dangerous-looking spots, and all we could allow ourselves was an occasional minute's rest to take breath.

When, at length, we approached to within measureable distance of where the herd should have been, there was not a sign of the ibex. On we pushed, more cautiously than before, and over the worst possible ground. Then, as there was still no sign of them, we began to lose hope, and when we were suddenly confronted by a rise more formidable than any that had gone before, I hesitated. Ram Deo, a veritable goat among his native hills, volunteered to attempt it that he might look over just one more crest, and I sat down and waited, a prey to the gloomy conviction that once more the cup was to be snatched from my lips. Meanwhile Ram Deo was nearing the top of the crest. We saw his head go up cautiously, then down again, and he came scrambling towards us, beckoning with excited gestures that plainly signified that there was no time to be lost.

Thus heartened, I stumbled forward anyhow, just clawing on

with fingers and toes, and full only of a determination to reach the other slope. Nor was I a second too soon, for there on the snow bed, high up a branch of the nullah that had stopped our progress, was the tail end of the herd disappearing round a bend where pursuit would have been out of the question. Before I could steady myself for the shot, all save one were out of sight. The straggler, instead of following, jumped to a rock on the far side. It must have been a good 250 yards, but I soon had a bead on him, and fired. He seemed to drop out of sight, but almost at once we saw him come tearing down the nullah towards us, seemingly uninjured.

"Fire again, Sahib!" called the shikari. "Quick! he has only got a broken leg."

It was all very well for Ram Deo to say "Fire!" but the ibex would not stop an instant, but jumped from the snow to the far side of the nullah, and then continued his course upwards through some thick birch jungle. Then, urged by Ram Deo, I fired a desperate shot and missed, after which I waited, determined not to fire again till the animal stopped. It was an anxious time, and probably took a year off my life. Up and up went the ibex, with never a halt till he reached the very crest of the divide. If he got over that, it was good-bye for ever. Here, however, he paused and looked back. It was by this time a 300 yards shot, and I knew it to be almost hopeless. But it was my day, for I hit him fair and square. Down he came, rolling the way he had climbed, and quite dead.

Well pleased, I was receiving the congratulations of Ram Deo and his following, when, with a sudden commotion from the corner, round which the herd had first disappeared, down came a second ibex, not galloping this time, but rolling down the snow in the exact track of the first, to be pulled up at length and stuck by his horns in the bed of the nullah, just below where we stood and close to the other. So deeply were the horns embedded in the snow as to give the

impression of quite a young animal, and there was a general discussion as to how I could have come to do such murder. Personally, I was quite sure that I had not fired at a small one, and the shikari's solution of the mystery was that I must have sent a single bullet through the two. This, however, was not the explanation. As it proved, this was number one, hit clean enough, but a long time dying. The one which had first come down the nullah was not, as a matter of fact, hit at all till he got that long shot at 300 yards. Why he came down, I know not to this day. Ram Deo said it was Fate, and I cannot improve on his version. Anyhow, I had two really good heads, with 30¾ and 38½ inch horns, and the two longest shots, but one, that I ever made. I was surely a man to be envied that evening, as I smoked my pipe and went over the day's events.

Needless to say, Ram Deo, the cunning, also evinced the wildest delight, shaking me by the hand and declaring that no other Sahib could have made such shots, and that my rifle was the best in all the world.

"And see, Sahib, how everything I said has come true, and how good is my fate. The Sahib will now give me plenty of *bakhshish*, and may he become a great lord!"

To whom I, indignant: "Oh, you of no faith, how can you claim those ibex? Well you know it was not you who found them, and that if we had stalked them as you wished, they would not now be ours. Surely the luck is mine, not yours, and therefore you get no *bakhshish!*"

"The Sahib's will be done! But I have some sapphires—not mine, but a friend's—which I will give you for very little money. Your highness will surely buy these!"

But I did not want sapphires, and so we parted, I supremely content, and he, poor man, considerably the reverse. His face, he said, had been blackened, his prestige and his *kismet* utterly gone.

The Sahib thought him only a stealer of sapphires and no shikari, and his heart was as water!

Yet it was with no great surprise that I learnt that Ram Deo had followed us to my next camp and had brought some sapphires. Though annoyed, it was impossible not to be amused by his insistence, which in the end prevailed, for I bought the sapphires, and Ram Deo went home happy. And how short-sighted I had been in despising them was after a little made apparent, for they were more highly appreciated than my beautiful heads!

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE WITH OVIS AMMON.

I HAVE often wondered if any one else ever had the colossal patience or, as it may be accounted, the colossal stupidity, to sit for two mortal hours, as I once did, over a dead animal in the firm belief that he was alive all the time. And not only to sit in a casual or restful way, but absolutely, or as absolutely as one could make it, motionless and silent, and in no comfortable position. Add to this that the anxiety during all the time was of the intensest order, attention continually on the strain—rifle grasped and finger on trigger lest the creature should be up and off before I could get in the fatal shot. Altogether a most absurd performance, a conclusion very clearly brought home to myself *after* the event; yet it is this incident of many which I look back upon as not only the strangest but also the most thrilling of my experience.

But I have never been able to tell the story. Others I have been able to put in acceptable form, but this one has ever baffled me at the very outset. Not that the tale presents any difficulty in the plain telling, or that I have forgotten any of the facts. But it is that the interest and the vindication of my own conduct in the affair depend so much on an effective presentment of the point of view, and what I have so greatly doubted is the possession of the gift to pass on this interest to others, to make others see and feel as I saw and felt myself—a proposition at least as difficult and as unusual of attainment as the well-known converse. With this note of diffidence, I shall make the attempt once more.

But, that the final situation may be in some measure appreciated, a rehearsal of some preliminary happenings and aspirations seems to be a clear necessity. For only in this way may the gradual working of my feelings towards the ultimate climax have a chance of being understood, or the sympathy I crave for resulting strange conduct be hoped for.

It had long been my dream to bag a good Ovis Ammon, that lordly ram of Tibet, now, and even then, growing so scarce and hard to obtain. I had already, after many delightful wanderings, secured specimens of almost all other Himalayan game animals, but the opportunity and the long leave for an expedition to far Tibet had been tedious in coming. It came at last, and my preparations were elaborate and ambitious. I was not to follow any well-known path, but to strike out on the tracks of a recent adventurous explorer to Tibet, and my hunting ground was to be in the forbidden land beyond the Kashmir border—forbidden not only by the Chinese Government and the Tibetan people, but also by our own authorities. I bought a caravan of baggage ponies, laid in supplies for two months, and was all ready to start in high hope, when events happened which it is needless to explain. I was peremptorily forbidden to cross the frontier, and the whole arrangement came to nought. There was nothing now for it but to accept my fate and make for one of the hackneyed and much shot-out districts, still in Tibet, but on the Kashmir side of the frontier.

This was a bad beginning, and I knew that success could now in no case be other than very moderate. Still, it was my only chance, and there was hope of a head or two. So I set forth with the usual resolve that it should not be for lack of perseverance or hard toil if I failed. Besides Ovis Ammon, the district I was bound for was known still to hold a fair share of not only Tibetan antelope, but also some burhel, and there was just the off chance of a yak.

At least so said my old shikari, one of those simple and ultra-hopeful souls whom one often meets with among this class—who cannot bring themselves to believe in the deplorable diminution of the game since their young days, and who are therefore ever on the look-out for the herds in the old places—a trait of character of supreme usefulness, as I was to find. For without this old man and his unflagging hope and dogged perseverance I know that my patience and energy could not have been proof against the trials of the long dreary days and weary fruitless searchings which were in store. I should have utterly collapsed and fled from the awful monotony of the terrible barren land long before the day of success arrived.

Tibet has often been described, but a word here will not come amiss to the uninitiated, and may, let me hope, serve to help out that justification for my subsequent conduct, in which, as said, lies a great part of the pith of this story. Imagine a vast, lonesome land, treeless, shrubless, of a uniform dusty brown, and to the casual eye absolutely waterless and utterly barren; a waste of sand or soft dry gravel, and to the human sight and for all reasonable human purposes limitless in extent. This at an awesome general height of 15,000 feet, the passes and higher elevations rising to 18,000 and 20,000; the slopes not steep, but monotonously rounded, worn by centuries of severe weathering, soft and friable to the summits. No human habitations, and no shelter from the burning sun or the sudden fierce storms of wind and rain or snow, terribly frequent even in summer, but having no seeming effect on the universal aridness, and producing no resultant greenery! How do animals exist at all in such a land? The question may well be asked. But the described aspect must be taken as a general impression only. Nearer acquaintance will disclose a faintly green patch here and there on a hillside where some hidden spring has oozed to the surface; there are real streams of water in the main valleys, and trickling tributaries, albeit few and far between,

find their way to these down the smaller depressions, nourishing scant patches of grass in places. But it is the *burtse* plant which saves the situation, a kind of wild sage apparently requiring no moisture for its growth. There is considerable abundance of this, which forms the main support of the animals, a diet wholly inadequate not to say uneatable, to our way of thinking. Yet the animals here —the Ovis Ammon, the burhel, the antelope, and especially the kyang (wild ass)—are seen to be as beautiful and sleek and swift as anywhere else ; and not only so, but, stranger still to say, are the largest of their kind. Surely a marvel in adaptation to hard conditions.

Such ameliorations, it is to be noted, however, come very little in evidence, and scarcely serve at all to mitigate the general impression as described. And though the land is indeed a fascinating one, deeply fascinating in its immensity, its loneliness, and its very barrenness and monotony, yet this is a feeling engendered mainly in the novelty of first acquaintance and contrast. No mere sentimental fascination could be proof against the dull weariness of hope constantly deferred and a quest unattained. And when the days ran on to weeks, and the weeks to months, without even getting sight of the big ram I had come for, surely it may be imagined how the terrible monotony of the daily round, the daily tale of no success, to say nothing of the daily sameness of the poor camp fare, would at last prevail, and despair and disgust hold sway. Easy also is it to conceive how well such adverse fate would have prepared me for fullest appreciation of a turn of fortune, and how loath I should be to let slip the smallest chance of success. In such mood was it then, when the long two months were drawing to a close, and the time had come to give up, that I began the backward trudge over the same weary waste, hope and energy almost dead within me. But if such were my own unworthy condition, not so the old shikari. Admirable old man, I shall not easily forget the untiring perseverance with which he

continued the search! Day after day when, having been at it from early morn, I would towards evening so easily persuade myself that I had satisfied the requirements of duty—for it had come to this now—and earned a rest and a cup of tea, he would ask for my field glasses and trudge off alone to have one more look round.

That he returned each time disappointed and in a state of physical collapse seemed to have no effect, no power to decrease his energy or dull the edge of hope for next day. It was on one of these occasions—I having in the afternoon, as had become my unworthy custom, succumbed to the seduction of a restful pipe—that after quite a short absence I saw him returning at what appeared to be a faster pace than his usual old man's shuffle, an unwonted lurch in his gait which might betoken excitement. And a closer view, sure enough, discovered a broad grin on his wrinkled old face, his small, black eyes sparkling with satisfaction. "Come along, Sahib, I have seen something!" With a spring I am on my legs in a moment, and follow the old fellow in eager anticipation, with excitement now far in advance of his. But he has nothing definite to tell, and, honest soul, will admit to no more than having seen some animals he took to be Ovis; too far off to distinguish horns, but one, from the colour, he believed to be an old ram. Not too reassuring, but having got to know the old man, it was enough to put new life into me. We had not far to go, and were soon inspecting the herd through the glasses. There were only three of them, still far off and high up, but I soon made out that all were males, and the general verdict pronounced two to be big and one small. The approach seemed no easy matter, and we were discussing plans, when down came the whole three straight towards us. This made matters more promising, but still there was room for many a slip. For they soon stopped, still high up, and there was no cover, nothing but the smoothly-rounded undulations of the mountain spurs.

Taking advantage of a side depression, we made our way upwards and nearer. Now there was a ridge to be looked over from which the herd might be visible, though hardly near yet—a bare, rounded ridge like the rest, with no stone or bush for concealment. Cautiously and slowly we crawl towards the top; as the herd were above us we might be seen at any moment. Bare-headed, and senses all on the strain, anxiously we scan every bit of hillside as it comes into view. Nothing for a time; then suddenly, as fate would have it, they appear from round a shoulder, now almost on a level with us, and within easy range. But we have instantly realized that we too are in full view. What was to be done? Was ever situation more tantalising? Here was what I had toiled for, and longed for—a fine old ram staring me in the face, yet I durst not move to put the rifle up. I felt as if I must not wink an eyelid. Surely it was not to be only a galloping shot after all; that would in all likelihood mean a miss, and hopes blasted once more! In a fierce whisper I threaten direst penalties if so much as a finger were moved, and hardly breathing we lie prone, trying to burrow into the ground. But all seemed to go right to-day, and we had not long to wait. First one and then another of the herd began quietly to graze, and seemed quite unsuspicious. Here was my chance, and I was not slow in taking it.

Now this is what happened, as recorded in my diary that same evening. Quietly but quickly getting the bead on the biggest ram, I fired. No stampede of the herd, as, according to all precedent, should have followed; hardly a start of surprise even from the one fired at. "Oh, wah! you have missed, Sahib; I saw the bullet strike just under him." I, too, had seen the sand fly up, and I failed to catch the sound of the well-known thud which so satisfactorily proclaims a hit. Yet I could have sworn the aim was true. Just as I was cautiously reloading, the big fellow *walked* slowly *towards* us,

and before I was ready had disappeared in the hollow ground below our ridge. So my next shot was hastily directed at what I judged the next in size, and then, hardly thinking now of precaution as to movement, a cartridge was quickly rammed home to be ready for No. 1, he being by far the most desirable of the lot. It was, from the configuration of the ground, impossible for him to escape without being seen, and, of course, it was to be supposed that the whole herd must be off now. But not a bit of it! Glancing across at the original place I saw that my second shot, which I knew was a hit, had only broken the thigh of No. 2. He was limping about showing very little concern, and No. 3 still kept him company. Still there was not a sign of our first friend. What could it mean? Were they all bewitched, or was it simply that this was their day of fate, as the shikari afterwards explained it? Even tame sheep would have been off for less provocation, and these Ovis Ammon, as I knew, have the reputation of being the most wary and timid of all game animals; not only reckoned the hardest to approach, but when alarmed, described as going off at an astonishing pace, nor halting, even to look back, for a day's journey—a point, let me here say, to be noted as an argument in vindication of my subsequent conduct.

This was the rapid train of thought as we lay very still, watching for any change in the situation, rifle ready for the big fellow. Nothing happening, after five minutes the suspense became unbearable. Though at the risk of setting the whole herd off, I simply had to see what had become of him. Slowly we squirmed forward inch by inch, and very soon, by craning my neck, I caught sight of his horns, then made out the whole body. He was lying down, head towards us, and had all the appearance of being quite at his ease. "Asleep," whispered the shikari. It seemed more than absurd, but I was by this time ready to believe anything. Anyhow, a shot now would make a certain end without difficulty, but the great horns seemed entirely to cover

the body, or at all events all vital parts. I was loath to run the risk of shattering one of these and thus, after all, spoiling my only specimen. So we determined to wait and we again slipped back out of sight and lay motionless once more.

From our position we could just see the top of the horns, and every now and then these would be gently moved, a quite natural movement we thought, as if the animal were changing to a more comfortable attitude or quietly brushing aside a fly. So here we were fixed in this strange position, in full view of the two smaller ones about a hundred yards on the other side of the ravine, and the big one lying below us—asleep! No thought of any protracted wait at first crossed my mind. I expected the crisis to come at any moment, and lay alert and ready. But the minutes passed and ran on to an hour without any change, except that the horns of the big fellow had ceased to move—only a further confirmation now of deeper sleep. The other two meanwhile would occasionally lie down, occasionally nibble at the *burtse* plants—still apparently quite at their ease, still bewitched. Thus yet another hour went by—I had a watch on my wrist and could see without moving; the shades of evening began to fall, and I was far from camp. The play had to end, and it was to become still more of a farce before all was over. My plan now was first to shoot the wounded small one, then at once get ready for our big friend when he should start from his sleep. I fired, and the bullet sped true. The young Ovis dropped in his tracks. But the big one still slept on. Nor did the other young one make any attempt to escape. More bewildered than ever, I had now to determine on the next move. I still would not risk spoiling the horns; so there was nothing for it but to stalk cautiously round until I could get a clear shot past the horn at the heart. It was with trembling limbs that the move was made, foot by foot, finger on trigger lest the sleeping beauty should suddenly awake. At last we were broadside on. I took

careful aim and fired. Not a move! It will hardly be believed, but even now the truth, though at last suspected, was not driven home. I actually fired once more. Still he slept on as before, and it was only now that the certain conviction flashed on my disordered brain that this for these two long hours had been the sleep of death; that the first shot had been no miss, and the moving of the horns was the last agony. I found all three bullet-holes within an inch of each other, all through the heart!

If ever there was a case of "hypnotism by suggestion," surely this was one. Two ideas, both coming from the wise old shikari, in whom I had all along had greatest faith, had simply burned themselves into my mind from the first, and in spite of obvious absurdity remained fixed to the dramatic end. After he had pronounced the words, I never questioned that I had missed, or that the Ovis had in very truth gone to sleep in the very presence of his enemies. The strange behaviour of the remainder of the herd went far to assist and confirm this last delusion, and my extreme anxiety not to throw away this my one chance of an Ovis Ammon head did the rest. I charged the old man with being responsible for the whole fiasco. But he could not see things from my point of view. To him, fate was sufficient to explain everything.

Strange to say, a few days afterwards I actually bagged two more Ovis—at the very last possible place, for the next morning brought us to human habitations once more. The credit was again wholly due to the tireless old shikari, although I did my part also in making no mistake over the two shots, the bullets going straight home at nothing under 200 yards.

So in sport do the strokes of good fortune, as of bad, often come more than singly when least expected, or, as it would seem, when least deserved.

CHAPTER IV.

STAG AND THER.

I.—The Call of the Stag in Kashmir.

IN Kashmir, as in some other countries, advantage is taken of the instinct which impels a stag to "call" in the rutting season, to compass his death. Here it is the Bara Singh that is so hunted—a grand deer, somewhat larger in every way than his Scottish congener, but otherwise very similar. But in Kashmir he inhabits vast pine forests, which—except in winter, when he can be seen and tracked among the snow to some purpose—necessitates resort to the method of still-hunting. Very few Indian officers, as a rule, get leave in winter, and the horns are shed before they can reach the hunting-grounds in the spring. The leave season ends on October 15th, and there is just time to put in a few days after Bara Singh in the calling season. Towards the end of September, the big stags, in obedience to irresistible impulse, forsake the high, secluded valleys, where in solitary and selfish retirement they have passed the summer months, and make their way down to the lower pine-clad hills. The purpose of their migration is a double one. The higher mountains have become cold and food is harder to find, owing to the first snowfalls. This is a good enough reason, but as nothing to the other—the call of duty and of love, for are not the hinds waiting in these pine forests, and, with any delay, may not all be bespoken and appropriated before arrival? So all turn up pretty punctual to time, and then begins "the call"—a weird and wailing bellow, meant to be expressive at once

of masterful invitation and proud defiance—by which the monarch announces his presence. True, to the mere human ear the note has in it more suggestion of melancholy than of these heroic sentiments; but ultimate results—enraptured meeting or desperate battle—show beyond doubt which must be taken as the true translation. The hinds prick their ears and, under the spell of the same all-compelling law, move in the direction of the call. They make no answering sound, and linger to feed as they go; but their going and his coming are sure as fate, and the meeting is soon a joyful fact.

But other ears, too, have heard the call. The heart of a hunter in his tent far below has leaped at the sound. This is what he has been waiting for, impatiently yet with good hope, for days, or it may have been weeks. To avoid being forestalled by others, it has been found necessary to secure his chosen spot in good time. He has been daily tramping the vast forests during this time, looking for tracks, and listening! listening! As yet, besides hinds, he will have seen nothing, and nightly has trailed back to camp, weary with hope long deferred. So now all is excitement and action; his heart is light once more, and springy his step. But whence came this call? He is doubtful, and consultation leaves him undecided, but inaction is now intolerable, and a start is made in a general direction, eager ears ever on the alert, hoping for confirmation or correction of the first impression. Yet not another sound may be heard on this whole day, or perhaps on the next. Then, again, it will come, from quite another part of the forest, and a fresh start must be made. But surely there can be no mistake this time; the stag must certainly be on that spur—a couple of miles away, but still there. And we make for the spot, energy and confidence renewed. Still, if the stag remains silent, to find him, we know, will be hopeless. On and on we go; we reach the marked spur; but never another sound, and no tracks. Then suddenly another roar, not from this spur, but the

next. A much louder sound this time, showing diminished distance. So the excitement grows, the caution and tension redoubled. Soon we are on the next spur, and nearing the very spot. No slip of the foot now; move not a stone, and let no twig be broken!

Peering through the tree trunks and into every glade and opening of the dark forest, halting often to listen and watch cautiously, and guarding each footfall, still onward we go. Then once more a mighty bellow, this time, indeed, close at hand. We hardly dare to breathe; our hearts beat and thump, and the wary tread is fearfully imperilled by uncontrollable tremors. We know that the mighty one is actually within range, yet nothing can we see. Was that a branch that moved? Yet why? for there is no breeze. Intently looking, we suddenly define, not a branch, but part of an antler. As yet nothing more; so we dare not fire, and dare not move. With rifle levelled, excitement now at fever pitch, we crouch as still as stock or stone, striving to calm our pulses for the shot. After an eternity the antler moves, there is a sound of pawing the ground, he moves a step forward, and we see him sniff the air, uncertain. A fair mark now, and ye powers! what horns! The bullet speeds true, there is a mighty crash, and the proud head lies low.

So has this fateful call led him, not to his lost love, but to his death. What an indictment! And in the detachment of cold blood we must feel it so, though fortunately such thoughts do not intrude at the time, and I fear that, given the opportunity, I should do it all over again.

True, it is not to be gainsaid that this class of sport is inferior to fair stalking in the open, whether it be ibex or markhor in the high mountains, or red deer in the Scottish highlands. Yet to me there was always a peculiar fascination also in this silent wandering through the forest, the electric thrill at sound of the call, the ever-present sense of the possibility of the game being close at hand, though

THER AT GAZE.

unseen, the prolonged strain of the faculties during the last half-hour when we know that this must be the case, and the sudden identification in the end.

II.—The Ther of the Himalayas.

The ther is not so well known to sporting readers as are the ibex and markhor, which have always been regarded, and rightly so, as the special prizes of hunters in the high Himalayas. His horns, being short—twelve inches to fourteen inches, only—cannot of course compare as trophies with those of the other two unrivalled goats; and the fact of his being found at altitudes somewhat lower than these, may seem to detract from the interest and adventure of his pursuit. Then he is not found in the parts of Kashmir most commonly affected by sportsmen, and most men prefer to go for the nobler game when they have their chance of a shooting trip. Yet the ther, also a goat, is a grand fellow, too. Indeed, apart from the horns, he is, I think, in general appearance a finer animal than either the markhor or ibex. He stands as high, is quite as massively built, and has an incomparably finer coat. With his long grey hair and shaggy beard extending far down his chest, no more stirring sight need the sportsman wish for than a rugged old male as he stands on some jutting rock, still as the rock itself, and gazing intently down, alert and apprehensive. And let none imagine that, because his haunts are of lower actual elevation, the ground where he dwells is any whit easier to get over, or that there is less interest or difficulty in stalking him. For, like those others, it is the steep and rugged cliffs which he loves, and scorns as he loves, and many sportsmen are ready to maintain that the "going" when after ther is worse and more dangerous than that met with in the case of any other of the Himalayan animals. Personally, I have not noticed this. I have found all sufficiently interesting in this respect. But possibly my

experience was peculiar. For on the only occasion on which I went after ther, no doubt luck, as will be seen, was decidedly on my side.

I had before this been on many glorious expeditions among the Kashmir mountains, and had bagged specimens of nearly all the other Himalayan game. And now I wanted ther to add to the collection. Time, alas! had by now had its effect, and although hill stalking still retained for me its interest above all other forms of sport, the instinct of unrestricted slaughter had waned considerably. I had no wish for an extra big bag, and told myself that two good heads would well content me. Quite possibly I might fail even in this. Such definite desires have a way of remaining unfulfilled, and many a man had come back with less, or none. I was fully aware, too, of those many slips to be reckoned with—the best ground already appropriated, failure to find the game, unlucky or bungled stalks, or all successful preliminaries turned to shameful disaster by failure of the bullet to find its billet in the end. All these things had happened before, and might again. So it was with no unduly extravagant expectations that I made my start.

The district I was bound for was easy of access. After crossing a high pass—some 13,000 feet—three long marches took me to ground where ther might be expected. My very first enquiries there elicited from the local village shikari that he knew the whereabouts of a herd. He had seen them quite recently, and declared that they never wandered far. Though hardly believing, I promptly engaged him—plenty of *bakhshish* if he showed sport, prompt dismissal and an eternal bad name if he played me false—and next morning we moved camp up towards the spot. It was a long climb, and we did not arrive till afternoon. I was tired enough, and was thankfully sitting down to a cup of tea an hour later, when in rushed the shikari, breathless and excited, to say he had seen the herd; and, indeed, I could see them with my glasses from the tent door—no less than six fine males,

and in an ideal place for a stalk. Delay would have been criminal, so, pining as I was for that tea, we were off at once. Everything seemed favourable ; the wind was right, means of concealment were ample, and there was no hitch. Half-an-hour took us to the spot where we should be within shot. Giving myself a short time to breathe and get steady, I raised myself cautiously from behind a rock. The place was strewn with big boulders and thickly dotted with low bushes. I could see nothing at first, and was about to move forward. This would probably have been the fatal and irretrievable slip. But just in time I caught sight of a head. He was not a hundred yards off, and I soon made out the body. I fired, and he disappeared. Then two or three came in sight at once, alarmed, but evidently puzzled as to the direction of the danger. So, lying very low, I got another fair shot, and this time there was no mistake. He dropped like a stone. Another shot, and then another, resulted in uncertainty ; there was too much cover to see if they fell. So once more I fired, and again there could be no doubt, for we could see him, struggling but stationary, among the bushes. Now we jumped forward, and soon picked up not two, but four, all fairly shot in the right place, and all with really good heads. So back to camp to resume my interrupted tea. As sharp and smart a piece of work as ever I did, the whole performance having taken little over an hour. Small wonder I felt at peace with all men, and the pipe I smoked that night was one of unruffled content. But the conclusion of the episode was not yet. There was to be a still more dramatic ending.

I thought I deserved, and had promised myself, what we in our Eastern exile fondly term a Europe morning ; that is, a reversal of the tyranny of turning out at sunrise, a snug turning over on the other side and a second delicious snooze, with a cup of tea in bed on awaking at one's own sweet will. We should have ample occupation in camp on the morrow, beheading and skinning and gloating over our

prizes. But this was not to be. Daylight had hardly come when I heard "Sahib! Sahib!" at the tent door. "What is it, you son of an owl? Did I not tell you I was not going to get up this morning? Get out of this or ——" "But, sahib, it is not this slave's fault. The shikari says there is a bear quite close. We have all seen it. It is necessary that your honour should be quick." Of course, I tumbled out at once. I pulled on a pair of grass shoes, postponing all further dressing, and joined the shikari, rifle in hand. He was crouching behind a tree close to camp, and I soon had my glasses on the bear. It was a big female, with two cubs, and the whole family were grubbing and gambolling about on the very ground where the ther had been. We had not watched more than a few minutes when suddenly we saw something roll down the hillside towards us. "There goes one of the cubs," said I. "Tobah, so it is." And immediately down came the old bear herself at a gallop, apparently in great concern for her offspring. They were now lost to sight, and we quickly determined to make straight for the place, as the old lady would not remain long away from the other cub. But luck was not with us this time. The wind, as we soon found, had turned and begun to blow upwards. The bear got our scent, and was moving off before I got within 200 yards. I had to take the shot, and quickly. She replied loudly enough, and I thought I had scored again. But the wound was in no vital place, and, though I fired one more despairing shot, and we followed at our best pace, she soon disappeared in the hopeless distance. All this time we had seen nothing of the cub which had taken the involuntary roll downhill; so we now made our way back to the place. Almost at once the shikari called out, "Look, sahib; what is this?" kicking something on the ground with his foot, and with a broad grin on his face. I went up, and there was another ther, dead and partly eaten. So it was no cub that rolled down, but yet another victim to add to my bag of yesterday. The old bear had found the dead

ther and was initiating her cubs in the enjoyment of a flesh diet when the carcase had slipped and rolled down. So, now, once again, we were full of jubilation, and the air was changed with congratulation and fulsome praises. The shikari had been with many sahibs, but none such a *bahadur* as this one; and who ever saw such a rifle! As for the bear, evil one that she was not to succumb to the sahib's bullet, she had, at least, done us this good turn. But it was all fate, and the sahib would not forget the shikari, who was a poor man. And so back to camp, to get on some clothes and smoke more pipes of peace.

By all rules of mere story-telling the first and main episode should have been rounded off by the slaying of the bear, and, perhaps, the capture of the cubs. But consideration for strict truth forbids. It was, however, a compensation subsequently to account for a whole happy family of bears—mother, and two cubs but little smaller than herself—again three shots only being required for this annihilation. Two more ther and one ibex completed my bag after many days' wandering. I had, meantime, in good faith, refused to fire at ther more than once, and these two were shot partly for the camp pot, and partly simply because they seemed to force themselves on me, and my resolution was not proof against the temptation.

The deadliness which I claim for the shooting on this trip will be readily granted. I had eleven kills for the same number of shots, and only two misses. And this was with a military Martini-Henry carbine, bullets of express pattern being substituted for the solid ones. Perhaps in this, too, there was an element of luck, or as the shikari would have said, it was all fate.

CHAPTER V.

SOME SHOTS I LIKE TO REMEMBER, AND SOME I WOULD RATHER FORGET.

I.—Some Shots I like to Remember.

THE memory of by-gone pleasures is generally reckoned, by poets especially, to be a sorrowful experience, and it cannot be denied that in certain circumstances and in certain moods, it is too truly so. Yet we know that the reverse is equally true. We like to fight our battles o'er again, and no one who has listened to an old campaigner, or an old shikari, recounting his deeds of former days, can doubt that the memory of these is a source of real pleasure. Regrets may indeed supervene in after hours of solitude; regrets that the like may not be again, and sometimes also regrets, and the more healthy ones these, that we had not done better when certain chances came our way.

At my first Indian station I was the perpetrator of a rather remarkable shot—fluke, my envious rivals called it. We used to shoot parrots there in place of pigeons: better than pigeons, I think, faster flyers, and excellent practice for snipe. Miss-fires were then not uncommon, many of us re-loading our own cartridges for economy's sake. This necessitated a special rule. When a miss-fire occurred, the shooter called "no bird," and was allowed another try. If the miss-fire happened with the left barrel, however, the rule was that on the second bird rising, a snap had first to be taken with the right barrel, this being empty for the occasion, before firing with the left. I was last man to shoot, and if I killed my bird I won the sweep. I

missed my first barrel, and the second shot missed fire. But, as explained, I still had a last chance at another bird. I snapped with the right according to rule, then, in the outrageousness of bad luck, came another miss-fire with the left. It seemed all up, of course, but, quick as thought, I cocked again, and had a second snap. A forlorn hope, but this time the cap exploded, and amid a storm of howls, the bird fell just within the boundary. Never say die, appears to be the appropriate moral of this story.

Sometimes one is annoyed on an Indian snipe jheel by the kites, these being so bold as actually to follow the guns, watching their opportunity to pounce on the snipe when shot, and often carrying them off before they can be picked up. Once a kite had swooped at my snipe, caught it just as, or (as I thought, but will not press the point), before it reached the ground, and with an insulting scream was bearing it off in triumph, when the second barrel quickly fired, put a very sudden stop to his career, and turned the laugh on my side. I do not claim that there was anything very wonderful in this: nothing further than the fact of bringing down such a powerful bird at fifty yards with snipe shot.

Instances are common enough of animals coming to life after having been long numbered with the dead. I have seen a good many cases in my time, and may note one which was perhaps somewhat more dramatic than usual.

A friend and I had been snipe shooting, and had a fair bag. We were always careful to see that wounded birds were killed, and kept an eye on the carriers to this end. At the close of the long day we were having dinner in a room of a staging bungalow, in a corner of which the whole bag of snipe had been thrown in a loose heap. When half through our meal we were startled by the familiar cry we had been hearing all day on the jheel, there was a flutter from the corner, and a snipe got up and flew quite strongly round the room. This

must have been quite two hours after we had stopped shooting, and we had counted the entire bag at least twice, no single bird showing any sign of life. I have seen the same thing happen with a partridge.

It would, I fear, occupy too much space, and be a weariness to the reader, were I to chronicle at length all the little incidents of this sort to which my own memory fondly clings. I have related how, with nothing better than a Martini-Henry carbine, I once had eleven kills (not hits merely) with the same number of shots, the animals being bears, ibex, and ther, all of them rightly considered as tough as any other kind. Once I killed a bear, nearly full grown, with a charge of No. 4 shot; and once, with a crowd of the regiment (which was halted by the roadside) looking on, I perpetrated a notable fluke by potting with a rook rifle a sandgrouse squatted at exactly seventy yards—a target not indeed to be distinguished at all, had I not seen the bird alight. It was with the same rook rifle, a perfect little weapon by Holland, that, shortly after the episode of the sand-grouse, I brought off another satisfactory shot, this time with worthier game in the shape of a Chinkara, or Ravine Deer. The one cloud on my contentment was the absence of witnesses, which calls for some little moral courage in telling the story at all. I was riding my pony on the look out for this very animal, for ravine deer had notably become so scarce thereabouts, that this individual, news of which had reached me from a reliable source, might, for aught I knew, be the only one of its kind left in the district. Stealing a march on my brother officers, several of whom were no less keen than myself, I went on my solitary quest with little hope of sighting the quarry and with no sense of disappointment when I swept one likely spot after another with my glasses in vain. This time, however, the unexpected happened, for soon after I had given up all hope, riding my pony home listless and inattentive, there stood the object of my search right in front and staring me in the face. The little animal

might, in fact, have risen out of the earth, so flat and bare were the surroundings. So sudden was the encounter that there was no time to make a proper stalk. It had sprung to its feet and would doubtless be off in a moment. Fortunately the right inspiration came in a flash, with the realization that a quick shot from the pony's back would probably miss ; so I slipped quietly to the ground and took the shot standing. The reins were over my left arm, and fortunately the pony and the deer stood equally still, so that, as the shot rang out, the animal fell where it stood. I paced the distance, which measured exactly seventy-five yards, and found the bullet hole right between the eyes, where I had aimed ; and if the incident grimly recalled the comment of *Punch* : " I'll teach them to be rare ! ", I fear that in those days my sense of satisfaction at so accurate a shot dominated any feeling of regret. Later in life, perhaps, there is room for other thoughts, but it is of no use pretending that they troubled me at the time.

Or I might relate how I peppered no less than three men with the same shot with which I killed a snipe ; or how, on the very last occasion I had the chance, I had thirteen snipe for twelve shots, a wholly satisfactory reminiscence. But the bare mention of these must suffice, the remaining space being required for the relation of three other incidents which necessitate fuller explanation.

The first of these is a somewhat wonderful tale—to me at least an unique experience. I had had the worst of luck when after brown bears on the occasion of what proved my farewell trip to the Himalayas : could find nothing, not even fresh tracks. But at last when hope had well nigh gone, a fine old fellow was spotted one evening. He was on the opposite side of the main valley, and about the same level as we were on the near side. When seen, he had just come out on to the snow bed of a transverse ravine, and was walking slowly across to thick jungle on the other side. It seemed a hopeless shot—

not less than 350 yards I estimated. But if he again disappeared in the jungle there was small chance of another sight of him, and, as he had not twenty yards to get over in the open, I had to make up my mind at once. So I decided on the shot, and this is what happened. I fired, and the bear slid down some twenty yards. Then another steady shot, and this time he *rolled* down about the same distance, pulling up against a small birch tree. Here he swayed about, looking helpless and sick, and I thought it was now only necessary to wait for his death. But presently he recovered and crawled to the jungle, only a few yards off. Before he disappeared I fired two other shots which had no effect. So now we had to follow and as quickly as might be. After a rough scramble, first down a thousand feet, and then up some similar height, we came on his tracks, very apparent, for weakness had caused him to slide down steep parts, and there was a deal of blood. Following on, presently we came on him in thick rhododendron jungle. He was standing up about fifty yards off, facing away from us, and when he heard us he turned his head round to look. All this was perfectly distinct—a matter of first importance to my story, as will be seen. I took a steady aim for the *coup de grace*, and he dropped to the shot like a stone. That was all right, and just the result which might be expected. But when we came to skin him, there was only one bullet hole to be found, and no other contusions of the flesh, but those made by this one bullet. Not a doubt of this in my mind; we searched long and carefully at the time, and on two or three subsequent days I used to go down on hands and knees examining the skin stretched out by my tent. So the question arose -which of the shots was it that hit? At first it was scarcely credible that the last shot could have been a miss. For the bear was certainly standing before me quite alive, and as certainly he collapsed to the shot. But then why had he fallen to the first shot, and rolled down after the second? And how

explain the blood? So it gradually became clear that it must have been one of the first two shots that hit; preferably the first, otherwise I should hardly have got another. As to the other shots, I can only conjecture that his behaviour was the result of pure fright and nerve shock. A curious case, and more especially so when we remember how common is the very reverse—animals which seem harder to kill when wounded than when untouched.

My next tale is of a monkey. Ignoble game, it will be said, and truly, and my only excuses for such murder are that I was at the time in a hill station where no form of sport was to be had, the monkeys were most audacious depredators of garden crops, and their skins were quite worth having. I, however, always made it a point to take a very fine sight at the head, so that it should be a hit there or nowhere. Nor would I have it supposed that I slaughtered these monkeys in quantity. As a matter of fact, a couple were all I shot, or cared to shoot. But the case of one was so peculiar as to be worth recording. It was a long shot to make sure of the head—just about one hundred yards. I had plenty of time, and took very careful aim. After the shot nothing seemed to have happened. The monkey had been sitting on a branch, holding on with one hand to another branch above his head. And there he was, sitting as before—had not moved a limb. Of course I thought I had missed, and prepared for another shot. But his absolute stillness caused me to pause and watch. Not a move; so I refrained from firing, and went towards him. I found that he was quite dead, and promptly going for my camera, succeeded in making a picture record of the incident. When I got him off the tree, I found the bullet hole was in the ear.

And now for the last story, and the "tallest," one of a duck this time, and one in which I was not the principal actor. I was out shooting with a friend. The place had proved a fraud as regards snipe, which we had come for, and only a few duck were to be seen

about the edges of the half-dry jheel. My friend spotted two sitting close together, and thought he might get near enough for a shot. He crawled forward, I watching, and at about sixty yards took the pot shot. One duck dropped, and the other flew off. All quite natural so far, but when we went up, there, close beside the one dead duck, was the head of another, fresh and bleeding! Let no one twist this plain statement into an assertion on my part that the other duck flew away without his head. I leave all explanation to the reader.

II.—And Some I Would Rather Forget.

In recalling "Shots I like to remember," I commenced by traversing the theory that the memory of past pleasures is always a pain. And now, it seems appropriate to point out that the converse is equally untrue. For surely no one will contend that the recollection of the tragedies of life, or the failures in sport, can afford pleasure. But this does not prevent the intrusion of the unwelcome thoughts, for memory is ruthless in its tyranny, and these unbidden recollections are not to be exorcised, perhaps are more insistent than the happier sort. Naturally these are not the things one likes to talk of or write of, and I have hitherto been fain to keep all the cruel flouts of fortune, the disasters and the shameful misses very strictly for my own brooding over in silence and alone; but now that time has, with unfailing kindly touch, assuaged the worst venom of the sting, I may raise the veil, and relate some of the unhappy incidents which were so bitter at the time, but yet served, no doubt, as a wholesome alloy to the successes.

I verily believe that once on a time I missed the record ibex. I know the sort of remark that this will call forth—the fish that are lost are always the biggest, etc.—and I suppose I cannot hope to be believed. Anyhow *I* did believe it, and, after all, that is all that actually matters as regards my own subsequent feelings. Still, I would insist that I had had considerable experience by then, and had proved

it not a hard thing to make a very fair guess at the length of horns, even at some distance through glasses. But this one was not a hundred yards off. There was no stalk; we came on him suddenly as we emerged into the open from jungle. There he was, standing on a rock, as I say, not a hundred yards off, and I never saw horns like his. A novice might not have judged them wonderful, but as the initiated know, it is the curve that tells, and that is what I at once noted—a grand sweep back, and the points nearly level with the ears. In shape more like those of a ram, indeed, and, in short, there is no question that fifty inches would hardly have sufficed to measure them. Well, I missed, and there is no more to be said. He was among trees, and I thought the bullet must have glanced off a stem, and ——. But I would rather drop the subject. I felt as if I had committed a crime.

I shall now tell of a yak—a specially sore subject, as I not only missed the only chance I could ever have of bagging one, but brought this about by deliberately ignoring the advice of my wise old shikari. A yak would have been a prize indeed at that time, for they were practically shot out on the only ground available, and had I got this one, it would have been the only specimen of the season. Indeed, a yak was in my programme only as a very doubtful hope, and day after day, seeing no signs, I had ceased to believe in them. But the old man was indefatigable, and one day we did come upon fresh tracks. After hours of laborious following, they were at last spied—three of them, one being a fine old bull. They were not in a favourable place, but the wind was right—the main point with yak—and with care we gradually moved nearer. At last a point was reached beyond which we could not pass without being in full view. The shikari advised going back to camp to return next day. But we were now not more than 400 yards off, and the open space to be crossed was only about twenty yards, after which we could reach a big rock, from which a fifty yards' shot could be obtained. This prospect was too much for

me, and after an argument I resolved to risk it. Watching our opportunity when the herd were feeding from us, we commenced to crawl, moving slow, so as not to attract attention. All went well till only a yard or two remained. But then, when I looked up, one brute had turned round, and in a moment all heads were up, and they went off in a lumbering canter. A stern chase was now the only thing, to catch them as they breasted the hills which hemmed in the valley. And I did run my best, but what can one do at 18,000 feet? No one who has not tried can realize the effort and the direful results. I did eventually fire a shot, but it was one of despair. My heart was bursting, and limbs and nerves were quite beyond control. And the distance was again 400 yards. So it was not the shooting I had to repent of this time, but my own obstinacy. Yet I always thought the luck was very cruel too. Just two yards more would have made the thing a certainty, and even the shikari had admitted that yak have very poor powers of vision. But the old man refused to see the matter as I did. He never said much, but his silence was of the eloquent sort.

Then there was that big Bara Singh; if no record, certainly bigger than anything I had shot, and in this case, too, it was to be the last chance I was to have at the stag of Kashmir. Stags here are found in thick forest, and as has been explained, the method is to listen for the call in the rutting season, then approach warily towards the spot, with ears alert for a repetition, and so gradually drawing nearer, till at last he is found and shot if the aim be true, or a sudden crashing through the undergrowth tells that his sight has been the quicker and he is gone. It generally takes hours, and sometimes days, to bring the stag to bay. We had on this day heard two calls, one on either side of a long spur, at the high head of which we were posted. Imagination and desire being ever ambitious, the idea of bagging both became at once dominant. And it seemed quite possible. For a shot well down on one side of the spur would probably not be noticed

by the stag on the other. No time was lost in starting for the first selected, and no performance could have been simpler or more successful than this. We went straight for him without a hitch, the shot was an easy one, and within half an hour from the start I had a fine ten-pointer to add to my collection. So now for the other, and without any delay, for there was the call again. The air seemed charged with good fortune to-day, and this was still further evidenced by yet another call just at the right time, which left no doubt as to the direction. But cautious now, not a false step or a whisper, for we must be very near. A little farther and we look carefully from the shelter of a big tree trunk. Nothing to be seen. But wait a minute. That might be a bit of a horn, for we have become knowing and have made the mistake before. Trying hard to put life into the dead branch, we are about to give it up, when at last it really does seem to move, and soon we are certain. He is lying down, not thirty yards off, quite unconscious of our presence. By moving our point of view a little we now make out the whole spread of the horns. Not a doubt of it, they are of unusual size : the other pair already secured, and the best I have to this day, could easily fit inside of these. But how to get a shot ? The cover is so thick that I can distinguish none of the body, not even head or neck. Shall we wait patiently till he rises, or what ? An evil spirit prompts me to have one more look from the other side of the trunk. Hardly a move has been made when I meet a doe face to face. In a flash, she is off, loyally sounding the alarm note, and the stag follows in another flash. I have only time for a snap at moving branches, and my chance is gone. Of course I know now what I should have done—waited patiently, or, getting into position for a shot, a whistle would have served. Such thoughts immensely aggravate the grievance, and from them there is no refuge for many a day. There is not even any consolation in the death of the other stag ; rather another grievance, for he was not the big one !

MAHSEER FISHING: THE RAFT.

CHAPTER VI.

FISHING IN THE HIMALAYAS.

TO those with some knowledge of the requirements of fish and fishing, the physical conditions of the Himalayas may at first sight look hopelessly hostile to the angler and his sport. It sounds, indeed, absurd to suggest that he will enjoy many opportunities in that country, seeing that it is a land of rivers that take their rise in everlasting glaciers, fed in summer by the melting of the snows and frostbound all the winter, their courses so precipitous that no fish could live in those boiling waters, even the boulders, which commonly afford cover for fish, being continually swept onward and downward. A poor prospect for either the angler or the fish he is out to catch! True, he must not look for sport in the inner stronghold of the Himalayas, but there are many smaller streams whose sources do not touch the higher snows, and whose waters consequently run clear and warm in spring time, and are once more in fine condition after the running off of the autumn rains. Moreover, it is just where the large rivers debouch from the outer ranges that the very cream of angling is to be had. And what rivers they are! Ganges, Jumna, Brahmaputra and Indus, are names to conjure with, and then there are those other four great streams of the Punjab: Chenab, Jhelum, Bias and Ravi, mighty waterways all, with others also, some tributary to the greater rivers. Yet they have earned little fame in the annals of angling, for India has so much else to offer by way of sport to rifle, gun, and spear, that fishing has been ever neglected. Yet the fact

remains that there are wonderful opportunities for the rod. The rod itself, with all its accessories, must be of the best, and the fisherman must know his art here just as well as elsewhere, even Scotland itself not excepted.

What of the fish that justify such a claim? Considering only the northern waters that fall within the range of our subject, there are, over and above the one great prize, the mahseer, several that may fairly be called sporting. The biggest of them all is the goonch, which may scale a hundred or even a hundred and fifty pounds, though a lazy deadweight and, apart from the fascination which surrounds all large fish, a poor thing to catch. Much the same may be said of its smaller neighbour, the "mulley," to quote one only of its many native names, a fish of about the same size as our pike, and endowed with just such jaws bristling with business-like teeth. It also gives indifferent sport, but is superior to the goonch for table purposes. Our trout is represented by a similar fish, beautifully spotted and running to a weight of five pounds, which takes the fly freely and fights well on the hook, but its range is curiously restricted, and in any case, trout or no trout, it cannot compare with the lordly mahseer, the only kind in all the Himalayas with a claim, like the salmon of Scotland, to the exclusive title of "fish."

If I confess that the mahseer is a carp, I may lower it in the estimation of those who know only the fat and lazy carp of English ponds, but the fact cannot be helped, and is quite powerless to lessen the prestige of this magnificent Indian cousin, so different in habits and appearance as to be unrecognizable. The difference between mahseer and common carp is as that between a lean, fast boar of the jungle and a pig wallowing in a sty, or between a podgy London alderman and Kipling's "savage india-rubber idiot on the spree"; and in each case environment explains it. The mahseer is a fish of the strong waters, a lover of the rapids, as much at home in the waterfall as any

salmon, as swift of fin and strong of tail. There is little enough to choose between them in outline, only in place of the silvery armour of the salmon, that of the mahseer is bronze-gold on side and fin, a colour scheme that harmonizes with the fiercer sun that beats down upon its native torrent. In size and weight, the Indian fish leaves the salmon behind. In some rivers, the average is well up to thirty or forty pounds. In the deeper pools, the fisherman must be prepared for anything up to sixty pounds, and one giant at any rate of ninety, has been killed with rod and line.

Other factors, however, than mere weight go to the making of a sporting reputation for a fish. It must take some lure recognized by sportsmen, and it must fight gamely when hooked. The mahseer does both. There should also be fish enough to prevent sport degenerating into mere unprofitable toil, and in this respect Indian waters certainly hold their own, and I am quite certain that I have not wasted the same number of hours on them, whipping the water without result, as at home. Indeed, the greater regularity of monsoon seasons and other climatic conditions in India preclude much of the disappointment due to weather and temperature at home, though, on the other hand, fishing is possible only during a more restricted period. Thus practically the whole of the cold weather, lasting roughly from the middle of November to the middle of March, is a close time, simply because the fish will not take during that period. Then, with the approach of spring, down comes the snow water from the high mountains some time in April, after which nothing can be done, at any rate in the big rivers, till autumn frosts have put a stop to the melting. This condition comes in September, and it is from then until November that the mahseer-fisherman enjoys his longest spell. True, these periods look short, but it must be remembered that they are at least continuous, seldom interrupted by untoward weather as is the case during the fishing season at home. As to possible results, a hundred

pounds of mahseer in a day's fishing need be considered nothing out of the common for the big rivers, and the smaller tributary streams should be good for an occasional bag of forty or fifty pounds as the result of the day's sport. There are, indeed, well-known spots, beloved of the Indian angler, which have been known to yield five or six hundred pounds of mahseer in a week's fishing, and there is an authentic record of one particularly cunning angler who contrived, by making a careful study of the mahseer's movements on migration, to land upwards of 2,500 pounds in a month, but such destruction is, fortunately, quite exceptional.

Let me briefly consider the sporting qualities of this glorious fish. To describe it as a bottom-feeder is partly correct, but is only a half-truth. It is chiefly during the season of rains and period of snow water, when no fishing operations need be contemplated, that the mahseer lives for the most part on worms, molluscs and such-like ignoble fare, and to some extent, no doubt, his habits may, even at other seasons, deteriorate in the low, still reaches of the larger rivers of its habitat. In spring and autumn, on the other hand, he is constantly on the move, coming to the surface on the look out for flies and small fry. It is these higher tastes, needless to say, from which the sportsman takes the cue for his own lures and methods of fishing. It has been widely accepted among Indian authorities that mahseer do not rise very readily to the fly, and that far better results are to be had from spinning and trolling. There is some truth in this, though I fancy that much of this conviction, with the consequently limited use of the fly, arises from the undoubted fact that larger specimens are not keen on taking a fly and that anglers in consequence do not care to waste much of their time over the smaller individuals. To my own knowledge there are waters in which fish of moderate size rise as freely to fly as salmon, and I venture to express the opinion that if fly were more commonly used, the results would be nothing short of surprising. As

a fact, however, spinning is the method commonly practised, and of all baits the natural is the most deadly. It is not, however, always easy to obtain, so that, as in other parts of the world, suitable counterfeits have to be found. Artificial minnows of all the best patterns are used with success, but the commonest of all lures for mahseer is the spoon, the size of which can be varied according to the volume of water and class of fish expected.

In the larger rivers, a four-inch spoon, or a natural bait weighing half a pound, should not be found excessive, while in more moderate streams, in which mahseer are not commonly taken above twenty pounds, the angler may risk the luxury of light rod and fine tackle, with spoons ranging from half-an-inch to two inches. To my way of thinking, the sport thus obtained is infinitely preferable to an occasional struggle with a monster. The fish may be smaller, but they take much more freely and sport is continuous, while there is always the offchance of one of the big fellows putting the light gear to a decisive test. I have no doubt that a salmon fisherman newly out from home would stand aghast at the tackle used for big mahseer, and the trace of twisted wire or four-ply gut, as well as the thick triangles with which the spoons are mounted, would probably strike him as unsportsmanlike. One encounter with a forty-pounder would, however, convince the critic that the man on the spot knows best. I do not mean to suggest that a mahseer fights harder or longer than a salmon of the same weight, as there is probably very little to choose between them ; but the mighty first rush of the Indian fish, as well as the tremendous crushing strength of its lips, must be taken into account. Though the mahseer lacks teeth in the jaws, which are like india-rubber and give excellent hold for the hook, he can crumple a spoon out of all shape, and, with his first deadly, savage snap, double up the thickest triangle, and the moment he has seized the bait he is off like a flash, making a bee line for the horizon and not pausing until he has

a hundred yards of line in the water. It is evident therefore that the tackle must be flawless, and, if such a rush is to be weathered, everything must run smoothly, else disaster is inevitable. The angler dare not attempt to check this first rush, and until the mahseer slacks of its own accord there are anxious moments to be lived through. If the line, for instance, be too short—and even 200 yards cannot in the circumstances be regarded as excessive—all may go at one fell swoop. In most situations, it is true, something may be done by following in pursuit, but there are spots in which such tactics are impossible, and it is for emergencies of this kind that the tackle must be adequate. The first rush over, the tension is somewhat relieved, but the mahseer is by no means on the bank. In the first place, the danger of having so much line out must be apparent to every fisherman, particularly as the mahseer is very likely to follow its first rush by promptly doubling back, and many a vision I can recall of wild winding of the reel and of desperate backward plunging in the endeavour to get in the slack, with terrible anxiety until sure beyond all doubt that the fish was still on. This point in the struggle reached, the rest, though still exceedingly strenuous, is, as a rule, more manageable, each succeeding rush being shorter and less frantic, until that happy finale in which all the spirit goes out of the gallant fish and the sportsman is at length able to tow him quietly to the bank. In India, at any rate, it is as a rule necessary to play the fish to a standstill. The scales are too thick for a gaff to be of much use, and it would be too risky to attempt any handling of so powerful an antagonist until he is absolutely exhausted. The average time that goes to the playing of a big mahseer may, I think, be taken at about the same as for salmon, about a minute to the pound. This, though subject to variation in view of local conditions, virtually accords with my own experiences. It might, perhaps, seem that the great triangles and powerful tackle should give the angler such control as to force an issue more promptly,

but he never knows whether more than one of the hooks has taken hold, or, even so, whether the hold is firm, besides which the rod has to be considered.

All said and done, the sport of mahseer fishing is equal to any that I know with the rod. One other point in favour of the mahseer, as compared with the salmon, is that, owing to an intermittent habit of spawning, there are always fish in season, so that there is none of the lazy wallowing of foul autumn fish or of the disillusion that comes with the hooking of spring kelts. On the other hand, I am free to admit that the mahseer cannot be mentioned in the same breath with the salmon so far as table purposes go, though it is not unpleasant in flavour, and, fresh from the water and well cooked, it is acceptable enough—in India.

I am not aware whether the mahseer would thrive in some of the mountain rivers of Scotland. I know no particular reason why they should not, and if, as we are told, salmon do not feed in fresh water, there would at least be no competition for food. Of this, however, I am quite sure, that, admirable as each of these fish is in its own place, we should be just twice as happy if we could have them together.

One mahseer experience is much like another, but I will just recall a happy memory of Muchee Bawan. I do not know whether the reader has ever been haunted, possessed, oppressed and bullied by a name. A refrain, a jingle of verse, sometimes exercises such fascination that there is no escape from it, sleeping or waking ; but a mere name ! More than once I have been so held by one, simply, it may be from looking at a map.

Muchee Bawan was just such a name, and its dictionary meaning, "abode of fish," did not serve to weaken its claim on me. I was always hearing about it too. A retired Indian officer first mentioned it to me many years ago.

"Yes," he would say, "I know all those places you have talked about. But if you want to know what mahseer-fishing really is, why, go to Muchee Bawan!" The name stuck long years in my mind, and in far-off Kashmir I heard it again; and yet again, when in course of time, the spell had all but lost its power, up it came again like a message from the dead.

"Regiment going to Sialkot?" asked an angler friend. "You *are* in luck. Why, Muchee Bawan is quite handy."

So there it was. I had got it again. The name haunted me as before. The jangle of the train taking me to my new station wove it into a rhythmic chant: "Muchee Bawan . . . Muchee Bawan."

I used to hear it on parade. I would fall asleep muttering the words. They were on my lips when I woke. I *must* get to Muchee Bawan somehow. And at last the opportunity came, for a sporting C.O. not only gave the necessary leave, but was keen to come as well.

Muchee Bawan, then, is on the River Tawi, which flows from the Pir Panjal mountains of Kashmir to join the Chenab near Sialkot. Not a large river, it is in more than one respect ideal for the fisherman, with its clean, rocky bottom, with sufficient fall to ensure succession of rapid and pool, and no overhanging trees on the banks to get in the way of the rod. Moreover, it holds mahseer in plenty, not very large fish, but ranging from two to twenty pounds, and not inordinately shy.

Our first halt on the trip was at Asan, where the water looked so fine that in other circumstances we would have asked no better. But Muchee Bawan called loudly now and we could not linger.

"Without doubt," said an old native, "there are plenty of fish here, but Oho! Sahib, at Muchee Bawan they are without number. But there is no road. The Sahibs cannot go without rafts, and rafts cannot be had without an order."

"Then," said we, "call the Lumberdar (village headman) at once."

"Yes," the Lumberdar agreed, on being summoned to the

presence. "Muchee Bawan is, no doubt, the place, and no Sahibs have fished there for many years. But alas! all the raft-men are dead of the great sickness, and I am a poor man, so how will the Sahibs get there?"

But we *must* go, and the passing of a rupee settled the matter, for the dead men came to life without a blush, and the rafts were promised for the following morning.

We, soldier-like, were punctual to time at the trysting place. The raft-men also were there, and had probably passed the night on the spot. They sat around smoking, and, after the manner of natives, thought it ample time to begin making their rafts when we put in an appearance. We knew the native mind too well to be really angry, so we just lit our pipes and watched the preparations. The goat-skins, hard and shrivelled, were softened in the water, for even this preliminary had been left to the last moment. Then, with much chattering, each was blown up through one leg. A ricketty native bedstead was then fastened to four of these, with odd lengths of string, and so at last our strange and crazy crafts were in readiness. These rafts, though to all appearance unsuitable to any but the quietest of still waters, are yet capable of negotiating considerable rapids, for the very looseness of their construction gives elasticity, and the inflated skins themselves cannot sink. Yet I have had occasional shocks when, with much floundering and yelling, the men would to all appearance be making straight for an ugly rock in midstream. Then with a swish and gurgle of water, we would shoot on one side into safety, and I learnt afterwards that this was just the right manœuvre, so as to give them all possible help from the shoot of the water off the rock. This, however, I did not understand at the time. They looked just as if they were vainly struggling to keep away from it. Hence some pardonable trepidation. On this trip, however, we did not encounter rough water, for our way lay upstream over a long stretch

of dead water which, dark and still, filled the bed of a deep and narrow gorge. On either side of it, the cliffs rose sheer two hundred feet, their bareness relieved by such ferns, creepers and bushes as clung to the dripping walls. The sun could not reach the water, and the air felt deliciously cool and fresh. Indeed, coming after our tramp over burning sand and rocks, we at first welcomed even the water that leaked through the raft and soaked us. There was a considerable extent of gorge to transverse, so that, even with no current, our advance was slow, being, in fact, at the rate of men swimming with their legs only. This was the mode of propulsion. Two or three men swam alongside either raft, holding and pushing with their hands and striking out with their feet, not the powerful frog-like stroke we know, but a short, straight little kick which looked quite futile.

Every now and again a skin would require blowing up, or a lashing had to be tightened. This, however, did not mean a halt, as the man nearest to the weak spot would do the needful without ceasing to swim. So we forged ahead, slowly but surely, though twice our way was barred by rapids, where we had to go ashore while the rafts were portaged to the next stretch of dead water. This presented no difficulty, since each raft could easily be carried on a man's head. At each halt, the swimmers petitioned for a smoke. Muchee Bawan, they submitted, was still a long way off, and they had already done much toil. A little delay would not matter. Indeed, they saw no good reason why we should not rest and smoke also, and if we were overtaken by night, why, then we could go on next day. But we sternly refused. We explained that the further Muchee Bawan lay ahead, the greater was the reason for pushing on.

"But, Sahib," said one, "it is quite close. See how soon we will take you there!"

"Very good," was the reply. "Then if it is so close, take us there now, and you can smoke while we fish!"

Here was logic indeed, so, marvelling at the eccentricity of the Sahibs, but perforce satisfied, they meekly acquiesced.

So on we went again, and, as the pace seemed to slacken, our impatience grew. Presently a far off sound struck our ears.

"Hark to the voice of Muchee Bawan!" cried one of the swimmers. "That is the home of all fish!"

As we drew nearer, the sound swelled and grew more defined, until the roar of the waterfall became an irresistible spell. Conversation was now hopeless, except in shouts, and we approached in expectant silence, and, as we turned a corner of rock, there before us was the pool of our dreams. The water from above, confined between two mighty rocks, with smooth but rapid flow, shot with a ten-feet drop into the cauldron beneath, whence, gurgling, seething and whirling, it gradually smoothed off into deep and frothy stillness. On either side squatted a native, a rough basket in his hand, endeavouring to intercept the small fry as they fell back in their efforts to climb the fall.

Here, indeed, was a suggestive scene, entrancing, full of promise, The place seemed almost to smell of fish. The reason why they should congregate in this spot stood clearly revealed, for mahseer, like salmon, have their seasons of moving up and down stream, and here was a barrier in the path of those that would ascend, a barrier, moreover, only negotiable by the largest at certain states of the water, and by many of them not at all.

I threw my spoon anyhow. Spinning in the orthodox fashion was not to be done. In a trice it was seized by a good fish. While I was playing him, the C.O. was into another. The game went on merrily, and in an hour I had forty pounds to my credit, and the C.O. about the same. Here, then, was the fulfilment of long anticipation. Muchee Bawan had not disappointed me, and I was at last free from the tyranny of a dream name, for I knew the reality. A

questionable release, indeed, for how well content I could be to be under the spell of it again! So we retraced our way down the gorge, our spoils trailing astern to keep them fresh.

On another occasion we went, full of confidence, back to Muchee Bawan. We did not stir a fin. Something must have been wrong with the weather, or the water, or the season. Yet it was on this seemingly futile expedition that I came in for another red letter day. We had three days' leave and had fished hard and honestly. Yet the most outrageous bad luck had pursued us. We had hardly seen a fish and had caught nothing but one or two of wretched size. Pleasure had become toil, and we were returning weary and listless on the evening of the last day. The C.O. had had enough of it and went back to camp, but just then I noticed some water-birds flying and screaming excitedly over a pool some way further down. I knew the pool well and had known it to be worth fishing, but there remained two hours of daylight, and I mustered sufficient energy to stroll along the bank and investigate the reason of all the commotion, for it might mean small fry, and that in turn might mean bigger fish. And so it did. The pool was alive with fish. It was as if it had imprisoned a school of small porpoises, and there were ten or a dozen backs out of the water at once. In less than two hours I had fourteen fish weighing over fifty pounds, the largest going fourteen pounds, and I had to impress a passing pony to carry them to camp. I fished on until it was so dark that I could no longer see where my spoon struck the water. Not being able in the circumstances to tell what size of fish I hooked, or what might be his tactics when making his rushes, was embarrassing, but it doubled the excitement. I was using a light rod, with single gut trace, and, as I was fishing against time, it was the greatest luck that nothing gave. Verily I had, if for one day only, found another Muchee Bawan! Such was not, it must be confessed, an everyday experience. The

usual routine was that of most fishing ; passing from one likely spot to the next, fishing each patiently, and, with luck, getting twelve or fifteen pounds of fish each day for three weeks or a month.

There is, however, associated with this same River Tawi, a memory of a variant of the game in the shape of stalking the fish, such as Shakespeare might have described as " the pleasant'st angling is to see the fish, etc." Yet a preliminary stalk is usually necessary. It not only prolongs the excitement, but infinitely enhances the satisfaction of the result. It is the same as when after deer or ibex, pigeons or wild geese. From a distance I have sometimes seen, towards the shallower margin of some still pool, fish moving about and occasionally making a rush. It looks like idle play, but is in reality the grim pursuit of small fry. Or, looking over the edge of a rock, or from a high bank, down into some deep, clear pool, I have seen them close to the surface, quietly moving to and fro and not stationary as they would be at greater depths. These are the moments for a stalk, for these mahseer are on the feed. The angler makes his approach warily, from below, for if he is seen before the cast, his chances are gone. Arrived within reach, he sees that all is clear and, with one deft throw, lands his spoon in just the right spot. The result, if his presence has not been betrayed, is a certainty ; there is a commotion in the silver stream, and a vision of head and shoulders at the surface, as the fish dashes at the treacherous bait. Then comes the sharp jerk of the rod, the sudden scream of the reel. All the angler's senses, sight, touch and hearing, are simultaneously gratified. This sort of sport may be had equally with a fly, and this, indeed, is the " pleasant'st angling " imaginable.

CHAPTER VII.

A MEMORY OF PIG STICKING.

IF I venture to claim that there is, in some respects, no other sport to compare with hog-hunting, I shall be expected to justify myself. Well, the sport of fox-hunting is the only one sufficiently similar to be mentioned in the same breath, and I do not think that the Indian game need fear comparison. There are, of course, points of resemblance obvious to anyone who has considered them together; the beating of coverts, drawing blank or finding, the "view hulloo," the chase, the checks and, with luck, the kill. Yet, in reality, once found, the whole procedure is distinct. In foxhunting, we have a gallop, fast no doubt, but collected, over more or less familiar ground. There can be no thrusting, for fear of over-riding hounds, and the going generally is soft and sound. Fences there are, of course, many of them stiff enough to satisfy the most daring, but there are also gaps, not to speak of well-patronized gates. The finish, to be in at which is the foxhunter's supreme ambition, is, as a rule, for the few only who are well mounted and ride straight. Such a chase, in all the bravery of smart hunting kit and in a cool, clean climate, mounted on a good fencer, is doubtless a sport for kings. I am not denying it.

Now, in pigsticking, save that coolies take the place of hounds, and followers are much fewer in number, all is much the same up to the moment of "gone away." Thenceforward, however, everything is different. Here no collected gallop avails if you would not lose either the chance of first spear, or the pig himself; but instead, a breathless

burst at top speed over unknown ground, blind, hard, and full of sudden surprises. It is good luck to escape a fall, but not a matter for despair if you get one, for there may be many similar casualties before the end, and you may make up leeway. The recovery of a fallen rider, who subsequently even got first spear, happened on two occasions during the competition for the Kadir Cup, an event which brings together the best men and fastest horses in the country. The final act in pigsticking is not the rush in of a pack of hounds, with yourself as a spectator only, but a certain fight, fair and stern, face to face with the " bravest brute God ever made," a foe who cares not a jot for you, your horse, or your spear, and who never yields till at his last gasp. To the fastidious eye accustomed to the immaculate pink and glossy top hat of the hunting field at home, there may, no doubt, be something unpleasing in the soiled kharki and battered hats in which men ride after pig in India, yet it always seemed to me that the spruce get-up was not more appropriate to our bright grass fields at home, than the scorn of appearances to that other wild burst through thorn jungle, all the heat, dust and sweat inseparable from violent outdoor exercise in the East.

Few tried sportsmen of my acquaintance familiar with both games hesitated to award the palm to pigsticking, the worst feature of which is a name suggestive of some village shambles, with squeals of protest uttered by some dying porker. Those, however, acquainted with only the fatted hogs of our stys at home can hardly realize that they differ from the lean boar of the jungle more perhaps than any other of our domestic animals from their wild cousins. I do not know, indeed, whether there is much to choose between the two in weight, since anything up to twenty stone is probably a good weight for either. The difference lies in the fact that the farm animal makes up weight by fat, whereas the bulk of the wild hog is muscle, combined with a height at shoulder of anything up to thirty-six inches. To this

physical equipment, which further includes formidable tushes capable of doing execution with lightning effect, may be added a speed that will beat most horses over a mile, a quickness and agility comparable to those of a wild cat, senses of the keenest, the cunning of a jackal and a temper which I imagine to be unequalled for ferocity elsewhere in the animal world. Here, then, is a foeman worthy the best sportsman's steel and one to be well ware of. Lion, tiger, elephant and buffalo may, each and all, be more dangerous antagonists by reason of their weight and strength, but for sheer determination and blind courage, all are inferior to the boar. The rest, unless wounded or cornered, almost invariably give way to man; but not so the boar, for if he has set his heart on going one way, neither man nor elephant will turn him. It is, in fact, the knowledge of this obstinacy that is turned to his undoing by the experienced pigsticker. Having, after a long and strenuous run, come up with his pig, he does not attempt to rush blindly in with spear, for he knows that his horse probably lacks the extra strength needed to drive home the thrust, and he foresees the risk of a lightning jink and resulting miss as the fruits of such premature haste, with the next man behind joyfully taking the forfeited place of honour. What he does, therefore, is to ride warily alongside the boar, which he keeps on his right, with the point of the spear down and towards the foe, certain that it will not be long in accepting his challenge and charging home. A boar, like an Irishman, cannot long resist such trailing of the coat, and the resulting headlong charge is just what was needed to drive the spear home, for a mere prod, even with a strong arm and sharp spear, will hardly penetrate the tough hide, and an ineffectual thrust at such a moment might have disastrous consequences. With such tremendous collision, there must be a general confusion of man, horse and pig for some breathless seconds, and it will be lucky if nothing worse results than a gash or two on the horse's legs. In any case the honours of the round will be

with the boar, which will go free for the time being, while the man and horse extricate themselves as best they may.

The ground ridden over in pigsticking alone distinguishes it from most other kinds of hunting. It is, of course, subject to variation, but pig will seldom be found in country which could by any stretch of imagination be called easy going. In the United Provinces, it will be mainly through thorn or *jhow* jungle, varied by stretches of tall,

GOOD HEADS.

stiff grass that effectually conceals the numerous nullahs, some wide, some narrow, and most steep, that intersect the ground in all directions. Here, too, the interest of the run may be increased by the presence of rivers, canals, or blind wells, and, worst of all, the course may lie through a tract of melon patches, almost impossible to recognize until it is too late to avoid them, when the horse gets bogged up to his girths in sticky mud. Further south, in Central India and

the Central Provinces, there will be rocky ground, the rocks flat and smooth, the hillsides strewn with round boulders of all sizes. Here also are plenty of nullahs, and the level ground between the hills is commonly interspersed with that most treacherous of all going known in India as black cotton soil, which, by some mysterious process of weathering, is pitted over with holes ranging in diameter from one to three feet, and of similar depth. As these are at any rate partially concealed by grass, and as the ground itself is as hard as iron, it may readily be imagined that going at racing speed across country of this sort is a trying experience for even the staunchest man and horse. Nothing less than top speed is good enough to catch a pig, and the cue of all is to keep on his tail from start to finish, not only to keep him in sight—he is a perfect wizard at vanishing—but also to hustle him to a finish before he gets his second wind.

From this brief introduction to the conditions under which this royal sport is enjoyed, it will, I think, be apparent that it has few equals, if any, and after a good run with a lean boar, the fun is by no means over when he is overtaken, but, indeed, has only just begun. Above all, it is essential to give no thought whatever to the ground and to have implicit trust in your mount, which is therefore an important unit in the game. The horse must, in fact, be not only trustworthy over the worst possible ground, not only fast, with a good mouth and legs of iron, but must also be of unflinching courage and as fond of the game as his rider. In the ordinary way, much may be done with a single horse, hunting, say, once a week, which is not too much in addition to parade work on other days.

On the particular occasion, however, that I am about to relate, culminating in the death of a monster boar known as the Terror of Rumnabad, several of us were taking part in a pigsticking expedition, which had been planned to cover our entire leave of two months, and, allowing for the necessary wear and tear of hunting day after day,

we calculated our outfit on the generous basis of ten horses for each member of the party. To find these, to acquire them for their irreducible minimum of rupees, and finally to train them for their work involved months of preparation, and in the end we found our allowance none too extravagant, since the outing was eventually curtailed by a fortnight owing to the collapse of nearly all the horses, to say nothing of accidents to more than one of their owners. Still, inasmuch as we got our desired bag of a hundred pig, the expedition was voted a success. And we got the Maharajah of Pigs as well. And this was the way of it.

* * * * * *

"Salaam, Sahib-Log! You are well come to Rumnabad if it is pig you are after. In this district truly the evil ones are without number, and I may tell you that close here dwells one that is not a mere pig at all, but one of the very brood of the Great Shaitan himself—the Maharajah of all pigs! It is a true word, Sahib. We dare not go into our own fields for fear of him, and many of our people has he nearly killed in these days."

"Yes," we answered sceptically. "We have heard stories of this sort before, and we will believe yours when we see your Maharajah!"

"See him? I can show him to you this very night, Sahib, and as for the men he has mauled . . . Ho! Ram Sing, Kesho, Gulub, come hither and show the Sahibs the wounds you are so proud of!"

Sure enough, there were the wounds. There was no mistaking the angular gash made by a pig's tushes, and one of them was not even healed up. Yet any boar might have done as much, and we laughed at the idea of this one being out of the common, and chaffed the men for their fears. This evoked a storm of protest.

"Not big, Sahiban? *Khuda-ka-kasm* . . . you may cut off my head if he is not as big as a buffalo. And he has no fear of anything,

the ill-begotten son of a devil! Ptoh!" And the headman spat on the ground in impotent rage.

This seemed a really good thing, and we turned in for the night with great hopes of the morrow—T., the cheery and enthusiastic, W., uncompromising of temper, a hard and intrepid rider, R., lifelong sworn foe of pig, and slayer of scores, N., the novice, a late comer of no experience, but very keen, and lastly myself. There was some difficulty in securing beaters, and the reluctance to come forward was less annoying than it might otherwise have been, since it seemed actually due to genuine fear of the brute we were out after. When, however, morning broke, we found that we had a sufficient following, including our own orderlies and saices, with a few of the more daring spirits of Rumnabad, among them two of the boar's victims, breathing curses on the enemy and spoiling for revenge. The headman, too, mounted on a sorry "tat," ostentatiously fell in as guide, though we knew better than to trust him with a spear. With high hopes, therefore, and with all the omens favourable, we pricked forward at an early hour, but, as things turned out, we had been too sure of success, and the events of the morning, which may be briefly chronicled, were unexciting.

A short ride took us to the pig ground, and, as we rode through the village fields, there were encouraging signs, in the way of uprooted crops and general havoc, that there was at any rate no lack of pig of some sort. We were taken straight to what was considered the most likely spot; indeed, according to the headman, there could be no possible doubt whatever that here, somewhere in the patch of high grass on this side of the nullah, we were bound to find him for whom we came. This was his hour and his stronghold, and the nullah had to be closely watched. The covert and the going seemed much the same as we had grown accustomed to, with wide stretches of tall, thick grass intersected by many paths deeply trodden by pig and by village

cattle. Strips of more open ground divided the coverts conveniently, with sparse jungle in which we should be better able to sight our quarry, and there was no lack of branches of the nullah to make the going interesting. The right tactics were evidently for the stickers to ride in line with the beaters, instead of the alternative, adopted in thicker jungle, of the spears stationing themselves at the far end of the covert and having the pig driven to them. There was therefore no delay in forming line, and not many minutes had elapsed before sows, young and small boars were on the move. These produced the usual wild excitement among the beaters, but left us cold, as we had grown particular. Then, from the right, came a more stirring commotion, and shouts with some note of fear in them.

"There he is, Sahib; that's he without doubt, the *be-eeman!*" cried the headman. This time we had no doubts, and even when we had sighted the pig, we still shared the delusion that he was a monster. This, however, was not to prove the run of the day. We killed our boar, indeed, in fine style, with a good chase and a good fight at the end of it; nor was he a bad pig, and, standing over his dead body, we sadly came to the conclusion that, if the headmen and villagers had not been deliberately lying, they had at any rate been betrayed by their fears into gross exaggeration of his size. Along came the arch-deceiver, breathless and dishevelled.

"Well," we cried, with withering contempt. "There's your Maharajah, and we don't think much of him!"

"*Tobah*, what is this? No, no, Sahib. That is not he; that's a mere *butcha*, one of his last year's litter, I daresay. I too was deceived, and God knows where the misbegotten one has hidden himself. But fear not, we must get him yet, the son of Belial."

Our hopes revived, and we scoured the rest of the jungle, but without result.

"It is very strange, Sahiban," was the headman's comment.

"My heart is water. But the Sahibs will be kind to their slave and not depart yet."

We reassured him on that point. We were not so faint-hearted as that, and orders were given for an evening beat, this time over the ground on the further side of the nullah.

Refreshed by our mid-day siesta, we again formed line for the second attempt, certain in our hearts that something of unusual size must be hidden somewhere close at hand, and strict orders were issued that no notice was to be taken of any lesser game. This, as it turned out, was to be the cause of much fruitless toil, for we started several fair boar without allowing our self-control to get the better of us. It was not, indeed, until the light was waning and ourselves taking counsel as to whether we ought not to ride anything warrantable that turned up in the last beat of the day, that, as so often happens, the real show began, just as it sometimes does when all hope is gone and you have drawn your cartridges or are leaning on your spear, with your feet out of the stirrups. Never was seen a more dramatic change than that which now set us in full gallop. My orderly, wearily, like the rest, was coming towards us quite unconcerned, when, of a sudden, his horse sprang high in the air and literally bounded from under him, leaving him a crumpled heap on the ground. At the same moment we heard the well-known "Whoof, whoof!" this time convincing beyond all doubt. The swift rush of a heavy body through the long grass was accompanied by an outburst of unprintable language from the orderly and by a pandemonium of shouts all along the line. To all came instant realization that here at last was the Maharajah, and "Ride! Ride!" was the cry. For the three of us who had fallen in for consultation, it was a case of devil take the hindmost, for, as the grass grew very thick, we had at all costs to keep the boar in sight. T. got ahead, and we knew by his yells that he was keeping up with the brute. Then we saw him try a thrust and forthwith

disappear down a nullah. Down came my horse as well, with no harm done, though it seemed hours before I was in the saddle again. Then I got after them, but only to find that T. had come down and the pig was nowhere to be seen. R. and N. were also up by now, and a fresh line was quickly formed in close order, and a systematic search commenced, for we knew that he could not have gone far, and every hole and thick patch had to be probed. Out of one he suddenly charged, and, as he went straight for W., we were no longer in doubt as to his great size. The sudden onslaught was too much for this horse. A swerve at the critical moment spoilt his aim, and we saw the pig get well inside the spear, and, as he fairly bounded at the foe, his forefeet seemed for a moment to rest on the horse's shoulder. Indeed, R. vowed afterwards that he could actually feel the boar's breath before, content for the moment, he disengaged and once more took his own line of country. The horse had offended beyond forgiveness and it was with no terms of endearment that W. rammed in his spurs and gave hot chase, the rest of us following as best we might. Incident followed incident, for ere we had covered a couple of hundred yards, R. in his turn simply disappeared from sight in a blind nullah, just in time to warn the rest of us to scramble through unhurt. As I jumped it, I saw R. on his back, as, forgetful of all but the pig, he yelled "Ride! Ride! Don't mind me!" Then came a warning shout from behind, bidding me ride straight for the big nullah, and, though reluctant to leave the line, I saw that there was nothing for it but to bear a little away from the pig and make straight for the nullah, leaving the others in hot pursuit. Curiously enough, this proved to be the manœuvre of the day, for the others soon lost sight of the animal in the thick grass, and I could see them ranging round in search. Next moment, with a defiant snort, the pig was on me. He had no thought of passing; he just meant to clear me out. We met with a shivering crash, and the spear went well in, but he had not yet wiped

me out, and that one purpose dominated all thought of escape. With much lunging, grunting and gnashing of teeth, the intrepid brute kept forcing me backwards, slowly but surely, towards the edge of the nullah, simply shoving against the spear that was buried in his own body. There was, indeed, no doubt of his accomplishing his agreeable desire, for my horse was beginning to shirk and yield, had not the others, hearing my shouts, arrived in the nick of time. The sight of them moved him to fresh fury, and, quickly disengaging from me, he dashed straight at R., who got in a spear that made him reel. Even now, however, he once more saved his bacon by a clever double, and we next saw him disappearing in a sick and tottering condition, but just able to reach a thick patch of bush jungle that had so far escaped our notice. He knew it, though, and had determined to make his last stand in its recesses. Though quite a small patch, there was no possibility of riding through it, so we were brought to a standstill. It would have been foolhardy, and indeed, hopeless, to force a horse into such dense covert, and we could not expect our coolies to face the brute in his present desperate mood, while the only remaining plan, that of burning the jungle, had also to be vetoed. There seemed nothing for it, therefore, but more trailing of the coat. One after another, taking our courage in both hands, we shoved as far as possible into the covert and lengthened the spear in the hope of getting a prod. More than once this moved him, and out he rushed with fearsome noises at the heels of the aggressor, who had no choice but to turn tail and save his horse. This, however, was the right game to play with the object of getting him to face the open, where one or other of the spears would get him. For some time, we failed to draw him far enough. Then, at last, came success and the final act in the drama, for R., mounted on his staunchest horse, once more pushed his way in, and this time seemed to have got his spear well home. I had also ridden up and was standing by to help, when, quick as lightning, the boar

left R., and came straight at me. With none too pleasant recollections of the encounter by the nullah, my intelligent animal incontinently bolted. The pig could not catch him, but all his self-control was gone. He was out for blood now, and he pursued too far for retreat. It was his last run, and it was the end. I heard a crash close behind me, and when I could pull up and look round, a curious sight met my eyes. There was a horse, standing over the dying pig, its rider leaning over its neck evidently badly hurt and seemingly about to fall from his saddle. Then, of a sudden, down came the horse, a full yard of broken spear-handle wrenched from the poor brute's belly, while the other end stuck out of the prostrate pig. What had happened was this. The Novice, who had been close to the point at which the pig emerged, rode blindly at it and struck it fair at right angles, after which he rode right over it. In his eagerness and inexperience, he had unfortunately lengthened his spear too much, so that the butt had first hit him in the ribs, breaking one of them, and had then broken clean across, leaving the business end in the pig. Finally, the horse had galloped right on the jagged end, piercing itself to the backbone.

Here was a finale with a vengeance, well fitting such a run and such a pig, round which we stood amazed but triumphant. He, tough brute, was not dead even yet, and it needed another merciful spear through the heart to finish him. He died gallant and defiant to the last breath, uttering no sound but a gurgling in his throat which sounded like an impotent curse. Home we bore our warrior dead, and recognized in him a brave and worthy foe, and that night we drank to him and his in camp, in the time-honoured toast of the sport :

"The boar, the boar, the mighty boar!
Fill high the cup with me.
Here's luck to all who fear no fall
And the next grey boar we see!"

THE RUSH OF THE PONIES

CHAPTER VIII.

POLO IN THE HIMALAYAS.

AT the great Durbar held at Delhi in January, 1902, teams of polo players from far-away Gilgit, Skardu, and Manipur, played exhibition games for the entertainment of the spectators. This means little or nothing to the ordinary reader, but nevertheless, I think the statement may form a text for some considerations which may be of interest to lovers of the game or students of its history.

The exhaustive and altogether admirable account of the origin and development of the game embodied in the Badminton Library volumes certainly leaves little to be added. But at least one point appears to me to have been given less prominence than it deserves. The matter of fact is stated, but the peculiarity of it has not, I think, been sufficiently insisted on here or elsewhere, and the explanation still remains a mystery. I shall try to make this more clear, whereby possibly others who have the opportunity may be incited to take up what is certainly a very interesting inquiry.

The fact I refer to is that polo came to us from a mountainous country—not from a plateau, or country of plains and mountains, but from a region so utterly rugged that it seems marvellous that the inhabitants should possess horses at all.

No doubt, it has been clearly shown that in the far-distant past the game was played in Persia. It was for long the royal sport of kings there, and was brought thence to India by the all-conquering Moguls; but, it is, nevertheless, equally true that to us in recent

times it came from the mountains, and that at the time of this re-introduction it had been so long extinct in Persia and India that all traces and memory of it had entirely and utterly disappeared. Nor did it exist at this time in any other plain country. In these mountain communities, on the other hand—Chitral, Gilgit, Astor, Skardu, Manipur—there appears to be no memory of a time when it was not played. I have no intention of suggesting that it was here indigenous; such a thing can scarcely be imagined and need not be surmised. But it is surely sufficiently strange that it should have so completely died out in the plain countries, with their illimitable scope for its practice and abundance of horses, and yet survived in these mountains where sufficient space is hardly obtainable for a playground and ponies seem quite out of place. And it is further to be remarked that, although the districts mentioned are now, and have been for years, the only places where the primitive game is still played, it had also been, at comparatively recent date, known in other parts of Kashmir, further south and considerably more suitable as regards extent of level ground obtainable. The old grounds are still to be seen at Gures, Kishtwar, and other places, while at Leh the game was latterly played in the main street of the town, no other ground being available. But here, too, it had died out, and only continued to flourish in far more unsuitable regions.

With the exception of Manipur, all the places above mentioned, where the game is still played in the good old primitive style, lie in close connection with the far north-west of the Himalayas, for the most part along the upper waters of the Indus and tributaries, a region second to none in the world in the general height of its mountains and ruggedness of contour. Here the scattered villages perforce are built for the most part against the hillside; where fields exist, they are in terraces; it is often hard to find a level spot sufficiently large for a tent, and thus it can well be believed that a level space even

100 yards by 50 yards is hardly to be had. Indeed, I verily believe such does not exist except at the places where the game is played, and in all probability the existence of the ground was the reason for the establishment of the community. Yet it is in such a locality that the game has for some centuries been fostered and preserved for us.

The question of whence it came to this inhospitable region is an equal mystery. There is nothing, I believe, either historical or ethnological, to show that it worked up from India. Far more likely is it that it was brought along in some one of the conquering movements from that wonderful land to the west of the Hindu Kush, whence so many waves of masterful peoples seem to have sprung, over-running both east and west, since Gilgit and these other places lie on the direct route from one of the north-western passes leading from Badakhshan and the Oxus, or from Afghanistan and Persia. But if so, why, we may ask, did their kinsfold left behind not keep up the game, or why was it not also introduced in the west ? * Why, indeed, do we not hear of it from ancient Greece ? For, as the Badminton volume shows, it really appears to be as old as that would imply ; and who more likely than the Greeks to be fascinated by such a manly and useful exercise ?

The case of Manipur is, if anything, more inexplicable. Far separated as it is from all the other places which we are considering —by the whole length of the Himalayas, indeed, with no sign of polo between—the same source cannot reasonably be assigned to the existence of the game there. All that can be said is that the Manipuris are distinctly of Tartar origin, and the Moguls and others of the hordes who moved eastwards were also Tartars. So that the game

* In the "Story of the Byzantine Empire," which came to my notice since above was written, a map of old Byzantium may be seen in which a space is designated "Tehukanisterion." This is very evidently the polo ground, the Persian word "chaugan" being still the common word for polo in most Eastern countries. So that the game did penetrate so far west at least in olden times.

probably got to Manipur through them somehow—most likely from the north and not through India.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the very thorough investigations which have already been made on this subject, there still appear to remain a few points for further elucidation.

A short description of the game played by these people, as I have seen it in more than one place, may be of interest and not out of place as a conclusion.

The villages being small and scattered, it is not an everyday occurrence that a sufficient number of players can be found. Indeed, whatever it may have been in more ancient times, in these days the occasions for a game are very few—a concourse of the people for some holy festival or a communal gathering for business being the opportunity. At these times, however, a polo match is looked forward to as the great attraction, and there is much rivalry and interest in the result. Sides may be picked up by two of the chief magnates, or some distant village, or combination of villages, may challenge the headquarters town. The number of players a side is very elastic, if not quite unrestricted. Ten or twelve is quite common—a hopeless crowd from our point of view—and yet, notwithstanding the smallness of the space often available, the mêlées are not so frequent or so "sticky" as might be imagined, and there is a fine dash and go about the whole performance. The start-off is quite a spectacular display. All the players of both sides are assembled at one of the goals. The ball being in the hand of the captain of the side which has won the toss, at a signal he dashes forward at fullest speed, followed, as hard as their ponies can lay legs to the ground, by the whole crowd. Arrived towards the centre the captain tosses the ball in the air, and still at full speed strikes it with unerring aim towards the opposite goal. I never saw this shot missed. Now more than ever the opposite side must gallop for dear life to save the goal. Some make straight for

TYPES OF PLAYERS.

it to assume the defensive, while others stick to the man with the ball, striving to prevent him getting another shot at it either by hooking his stick or by hitting it back themselves. The game is now in full swing, galloping and hitting and jostling and crossing in all directions —no rules whatever except to hit towards the proper goal and not to kill any of your opponents on purpose. Soon will come an overwhelming rush for one of the goals, and amid frantic yells the ball shoots through. But this is not the end, as with us, and not yet has the goal been won or lost. Before the full value can be scored, the man who hit the ball through *must dismount and pick it up!* He leaps to the ground and, leaving his pony anyhow, scrambles for the ball amid the prancing feet of the other ponies, and heedless of the slashing sticks of the excited players. For now the defenders, of course, do all they can to hit the ball back into play, they in their turn being hustled and jostled by the aggressors to frustrate this and help their own man. I have not seen this finale mentioned by any others who have described the game, but, nevertheless, this is what I have seen at Skardu, and, as well as I can remember, also at Gilgit. Even if not universal, it is at all events an interesting variation, though one which cannot well be imagined in our well-ordered modern game. And if this were an incongruity, what shall we say of the last act of all, where the beaten side are obliged to do homage to the victors, each in turn making humble salaams in presence of the crowd of spectators in acknowledgment of defeat, a powerful brass band playing very discordant music the while? Verily, we have lost the art to carry through a scene of this sort, as we have also lost the taste for the spectacular dash at the first start-off. Yet such scenes seem wholly appropriate to these primitive players, and perhaps more real enjoyment also is to be got out of the old rough game than from the deadly earnestness and strict order of the new. Personally, I can look back with greater pleasure and regret to the

evolutionary stage of the game in the early seventies, when we played for an hour on end on a fifty rupee pony, than to the game of later development with its short, sharp bursts of eight minutes, and a succession of 500-rupee mounts between one's legs. But no doubt there is an element of *laudator temporis acti* in the reason for this.

In a struggle such as I have described, it may well be believed, croppers are not few, and indeed one wonders there are not more. But serious injuries are very rare, and no attention is paid to a man on the ground. They have fine eyes and grand nerves, these children of Nature, and the clean hitting in almost impossible positions by the best of the players is a marvel and a delight to see. Strong in wind and limb they and their ponies must also be. For the game goes on for an hour, or a good deal more, without a pause except when a goal is scored, and this is the more extraordinary considering that the men are in no sort of training for fast work of this sort, and the ponies are taken straight from grazing on the hillside.

CHAPTER IX.

IMPRESSIONS OF TIBET.

PUBLIC attention and interest is specially directed at the present time to Tibet and its people. My own personal experience of the country was limited to the western portion Ladak, or Kashmir Tibet—a very long way from the scene of the expedition which recently visited the Forbidden City. But it is all the same. Whether we read the experiences of Bower, who more than ten years ago adventurously led the way by crossing the country from extreme west to extreme east, of Wellby, or Littledale, or the intrepid Sven Hedin; all tell a similar tale. Of a vast lone land—some two thousand miles by fourteen hundred, with a mean elevation nearly as high as Mont Blanc—for the most part unspeakably bleak and barren, but in parts dotted over with bright blue lakes, generally salt, and all gradually drying up, the undulating expanse broken by a succession of rugged mountain ranges rising to still higher altitudes, from which many icy streams pour their waters into the lakes. A land of boisterous winds and constantly recurring fierce, sudden storms of snow, hail and rain, alternating with fiery outbursts of burning sunshine. A desperately inhospitable land, and for the most part uninhabited and uninhabitable; to the casual eye quite devoid of vegetation, but yet supporting large herds of shaggy yaks, antelope and wild donkeys, sleek and strong and fleet. No land in the world less inviting, and yet none more supremely fascinating in its own unique way. And the Kashmir portion of this country, although in its western parts, like the Lhassa region in the

east, no doubt less generally barren and more under the influence of civilisation, yet is also of quite absorbing interest, and possesses all the peculiar characteristics of the other parts. Monks and monasteries prayer-wheels, *manis* and *chortens* are all there. A few marches east of Leh, the capital, the habitations cease, the barrenness begins, and the general elevation is as high, if not higher, than the land further east. My own chief aim was sport, and I had in no way thought of making any study of either country or people, except in so far as this might further my particular ends. But no one in such a land, presenting such contrasts to anything else under the sun, could fail to have his attention arrested. And so I have a few (very few, I regret to say), remarks and records of impressions in my note-books, which may be of some little interest. It is many years since my visit, but what is that in respect of a country which has not changed for a thousand ?

In the matter of configuration one prominent fact, besides the wonderful elevation, seems to stand out clear and marvellous. The whole immense table-land, stretching from Kashmir to China is, so to speak, self-contained as to its drainage ; no connection with the sea, except from the southern and western fringes where the Brahmaputra, Indus, and Sutlej take their rise. Notwithstanding that there is throughout the year a very constant, though intermittent, precipitation of moisture—snow and rain and hail—the whole is retained in the land itself, part absorbed in the loose soil and the remainder finding its way to the numerous lakes. Then another point to be noted in connection with this is that, generally speaking, the greater part of the surface of these vast barren stretches is soft—covered with a deep layer of gravelly sand, or where there is moisture from melting snow, with quagmires of loose mud. And this by no means in the valley bottoms only. The entire slopes and tops of undulations, and even steep hills, are often the same. This is, of course, merely an illustra-

tion of the results of general weathering, but on what a colossal scale ! For over great stretches this collection of loose material is no mere surface layer, but of depth not easy to estimate. And during my long tramps and rides over these wastes the reflection would often intrude of what a vast amount of *débris* was here collected, ready-made as it were, to be carried sea-ward when the time should come. No slow grinding down of rock required. But when in slow process of the wearing ages, or accelerated, as might be possible, by some sudden earthquake convulsion, the barrier of the outer Himalayas should be removed and this land come under the influence of full monsoon conditions, what avalanches of stuff would then be transported, not in an age, but at once, to the nearest ocean ! Enough, we might imagine, to fill it up in great part, at least enough very materially to extend the then existing shore lines. For the elevation at which all this accumulation lies ready must be borne in mind. The conditions are far different from those of a low-lying desert, such as the Sahara for instance. Do geologists, we wonder, take such possibilities into their calculations, to say nothing of the puzzles which would be added by the many fossils of shells and other remains, animal and vegetable, suddenly transported from a high land to the level of the sea ? Has anything precisely similar happened in the past, or will it be admitted that it may in the future ? I am no geologist, and put the questions with extreme diffidence and prepared for scathing ridicule.

The effects of elevation often puzzled me. We hear of bleeding at the nose, sickness and other dire effects during the ascent of Mont Blanc, and other mountains of such respectable height, and I myself have experienced headache and nausea while climbing passes of even lower elevation in the outer Himalayas, and breathlessness when trying to sleep. Yet in Tibet I have been able to smoke my morning cheroot with complete comfort while climbing towards 18,000 feet, and have lived and hunted for a month at a height not far short of this.

Here I felt little inconvenience except when attempting to run or to climb too fast. Then, indeed, one would be brought up with a round turn, and constrained to confess the impossibility. I lost a pony, undoubtedly from the effects of elevation, and my people sometimes complained of headache, But, strange to say, my servants from the plains of India seemed, if anything, less susceptible than the natives of the country. This was perhaps an unusual experience, and, of course, might be due to uncommon strength in the individuals. But to what was my own immunity due? It always seemed to me to point to some other influence besides mere elevation, which oppressed me in the more humid regions, and that it was perhaps the clearness and dryness of the air in Tibet which gave greater strength to the lungs. No doubt, however, in actual climbing it is the quickness of the change from low to high level which produces the unpleasant effects, and the system, I suppose, accommodates itself to the new conditions after being for some time at an increased height.

If then, the whole country, with problems such as these, have their interest, the people and their ways and works have at least equal fascination. On entering Ladak by the usual route from Kashmir proper, over the Zoji La pass, what at once strikes the traveller is the complete contrast in everything—country and people. On the other side we leave behind a lovely green land, luxuriant in grass and undergrowth, and glorious forest-clad slopes. On this, we find a dreary waste of bare mountains, no grass or greenery, and not a tree, save where an occasional stream affords moisture for a few small willows or poplars, artificially planted, so effectual is the barrier of the outer Himalayas to the further progress of the monsoon rains. On the other side, again, we leave an Aryan people with oval faces and full beards. On this we are at once in the midst of the Tartar type, beardless, broad faces, and small beady eyes looking with a twinkling humour out of their narrow slits. And the language, too, is of course a complete

transformation. Proceeding, we shall presently come to the first monastery and the first monks. The monastery will be perched high on some isolated hill, or built into a steep cliff, having an indescribable look of loneliness and aloofness from the world, the situation having been purposely selected for its difficulty of access from below. Security from attack has probably had something to do with the selection of site, but the *idea* most strongly apparent, and forced, as it were, on the imagination, is that of aspiration towards immortal heights, and deliberate desire of detachment from, and superiority to, the world below. As we travel further, a long, low wall will be encountered, running in the same direction as the road, and apparently occupying or blocking the centre of it. This is no dividing barrier, nor is it part of any fortification, but useless, seemingly, and of no meaning. On approaching we find that the path divides on either side of this wall, each section being equally trodden; but there is no choice. The left hand path must be taken, the wall remaining on the right. This, indeed, we afterwards learn, is one form of prayer, for every one of the countless small slabs of stone which cover the sloping roof of the wall are inscribed with the one universal and all sufficing prayer—the mysterious, and to us (even when translated) meaningless. "*Om mane padme haun*": "Oh! the jewel in the lotus, Amen." These walls vary in length from about one hundred yards to a quarter of a mile, and one I saw could not have been less than eight hundred yards; from six to ten feet high, about twelve feet broad at base and sloping to an apex at the top. Think of the labour expended, not so much in the construction of the wall, but in the carving of all the prayer stones! This last is the work of the monks, and it is not a dead idea, for I found a carver at work on a prayer of more ambitious size on a rock face, a photograph of which was secured. Then we have the small prayer machines carried in the hand and constantly revolved, a prayer for each turn, the strings of beads for ever being told to the same tale,

and where there is a convenient stream there will be a wheel turned by the water, the mystic words in bright painted letters on its flanges. So it is all made easy, and all the vainest mummery, some may say. But surely there is something else! One cannot help seeing, or at least feeling, that there is an underlying idea, and that idea, however it may have since degenerated, must have been a deeply religious one —a strong desire, if nothing more, to keep the reality of the other world daily and hourly in mind.

I visited Himis Monastery, and was fortunate in being able to do so at the time of the great annual gathering. The grotesque marvels of the pageants there have been often described—the monastery itself, built, one might almost say plastered against a sheer cliff, which towers above it and sinks deep below, the labyrinth of dark passages, rooms and temples within, the vast store of holy books, the images and rows of chanting monks, the weird dances of the mummers in the several plays and shows, and the wonderful old-world instruments which accompany the performances. The principal play, as I remember it, was a representation of the torments of the unworthy dead in the Buddhist hell or purgatory. The wretched victims, cowering in the centre, are surrounded by a throng of awful demons, fearfully masked and attired, and brandishing spears and tridents and other terrible weapons. These circle around with measured step, lunging at and ever threatening the unlucky damned, while the instruments rattle and blare louder and more discordant, and the demons howl, as each successive climax is reached. So it goes on from phase to phase ; dresses are changed for fresh acts, each more awesome than the last, till a *finale* is reached in a whirling circle of gibbering skeletons. The whole thing might be laughed at, and derided, of course, but indeed one is under a spell at the time sufficient to restrain from levity, and no doubt it is fearfully realistic to the gaping crowd of onlookers.

What struck me most in this modern aspect of Buddhism was the

extraordinary likeness of many of its practices and tendencies to Roman or Greek Catholicism. The monasteries, the images and the saints, rosaries and incense: the monks and priors, with their shaven heads and coarse long cassocks caught in at the waist: the fastings and ceremonial and impressive chants, with accompaniment of appropriate, if barbaric, music, all startlingly similar. Then the Dalai Lama himself in his holy city, wielding temporal as well as absolute spiritual power. Does not this also correspond exactly to the Pope and Rome? Latter day innovations on the original simple creeds are common to both, and in each no doubt from the same cause or reason—the old, old story—that irrepressible craving of weak human nature for the assistance of show and sham and ceremonial, the demand for the shadow instead of the spiritual substance. A state of things and an opportunity inevitably to be recognized by the human nature of the priest, and utilized to his own aggrandizement. For it need not be said that all these practices of present-day Buddhism are at least as far removed from the teachings of the gentle master as are the existing usages of the higher Christian churches from the original simplicity, all of which shows nothing more than that human nature is much the same all the world over.

I had the privilege of seeing in the flesh the latest incarnation of *Kushok*—of the old monk who founded this monastery many centuries ago. He was a pleasant-faced, though grave, lad of some ten years old. The priorship is not handed down from father to son, nor is it given by election. The prior is believed to live for ever, and on the death of one, search is at once commenced for the new incarnation. This boy was discovered far away in the east of Tibet, and had been brought to Himis only a few days before I saw him. I have forgotten by what means he was first recognized, but it was firmly believed that he had subsequently proved beyond doubt the accuracy of the selection by pointing out the last parts of the road, and recognizing all his own

personal belongings on arrival. When I proposed to take his photograph, he flatly refused, with a look of some fear and entire disgust. Had I known that a gleam of sunshine was to come at the exact moment required, I could have snap-shotted him without asking, and without offence. I was much interested to see in Sven Hedin's last book a notice of this same boy, and of his subsequent hard lot, condemned to live in a small dark cell for six years, alone and quite apart from the monastery, and never allowed to see a human face. This is by way of preparation for his great charge, and I am glad to think that his period of probation should end next year.

CHAPTER X.

THE VOICE OF THE HORSE.

FEW of us who have to do with horses know any utterance of theirs beyond the quiet whinny of contentment from stable or paddock, either at feeding time or in response to some caress, or the louder neigh, with something of challenge in it, when a number of horses are brought together on parade or at a show. Everyday sounds like these stablemen know well and they treat the alarming groans during sleep with the contempt born of familiarity, though these are more suggestive of bodily pain than pleasant dreams. As for the scream of the war horse in battle, to which many who have never heard it give great prominence, I confess to being sceptical. The only notes heard during the impetuous charges of squadron or regiment in mimic warfare, or even in those more realistic exercises of mounted combat, when horse and rider are mixed up in the *mêlée*, and the only difference from the real business is in the bluntness of the weapons used, are those connected with strenuous exercise and hard breathing. This, of course, is a personal opinion only, and I would not go so far as to deny the possibility of such war screams, since there is at times such extraordinary sympathy between horse and man that more particularly in olden time battles in the East, where stallions were in general use, the fury of the fight may have taken possession of both, and the voice of the chargers may have mingled with the battle cries of their owners.

At any rate, as the experiences which I am about to relate will testify, horses do now and again express their emotions in tones quite

distinct from those to which we are accustomed. I owned one whose temper was, to put it mildly, uncertain. For days, weeks, or even months together, he would behave like a lamb ; then came a sudden fit of rebellion, with no cause that I could ever discover. What lent point to these outbreaks was his Australian blood, for, like many "Walers," he was an adept at buckjumping. Suddenness is the secret of a horse's success in this manœuvre. We may be going along at a smart pace, with no sign of temper or ill-will, when, without warning of any kind, the forefeet are planted rigidly in front, the head shoots down well between the knees, and the back arches with a sudden indescribable heave. This performance generally succeeds in instantly unseating the rider ; if not, it is repeated, the second heave being accompanied by a twist that, in a flash, puts the head where the tail should be. This sort of gymnastics few riders, unless they be seasoned stockmen on Australian stations, can long withstand, and so, when the fit took him, this animal of mine never failed to send me in a somersault, landing me on the ground before I realized the position. I recall his success unashamed, because my native orderly, a man selected for his riding, was more than once obliged to recover from similar experiences in hospital. On one occasion, indeed, such an exhibition of buckjumping placed me in a more uncomfortable position even than usual. One sultry, breathless Sunday morning, I was out for a quiet ride over the parade ground of the British infantry battalion of the station. Suddenly I heard a rifle-shot, but the noise made by the new Lee-Metford, then recently introduced, seemed insignificant, and I paid little heed. I happened, in fact, to be riding in the direction of the sound, and presently there came a second shot, with the whiz of a bullet unpleasantly close, to be followed by a third. This time I saw a puff of smoke come from a low wall some three hundred yards distant, and this brought me to a standstill. A shout came from behind, and, looking back, I was astonished to see a line

of British soldiers in skirmishing order advancing towards me, and just as I noticed one of them beckon, came another shot. I now knew beyond all doubt that something unusual was up, so I deemed it best to ride straight back to the skirmishers. Putting my horse, who was apparently in the sweetest of tempers, at a canter, I had got within a few paces of them, and was about to enquire what was amiss, when the brute chose this most unpropitious moment to practise his devilry. Came the usual planting of the forefeet, the sudden heave, the unmistakable twist, and, looking down from the top of the parabola, which I happened to describe on this occasion, I could just see the skirmishers halt in sheer astonishment, without orders. No doubt, the situation was amusing enough from their point of view, but what a position for a Captain of Lancers to be landed sprawling ignominiously at the feet of a lot of "Tommies," who, knowing nothing of buckjumping, would ascribe the misadventure to pure ignorance of riding. As a matter of fact, the business in hand was sufficiently serious to eclipse all such reflections, for they were out for the capture of a comrade who had broken loose from the cells, and who, having possessed himself of a rifle and some rounds of ammunition, was running amok. Fortunately for us, he was a bad shot, and he was eventually taken into custody before anything tragic happened. This was a memorable experience. The horse offered no further objection to my remounting, and we went home on the best of terms, he showing no further ill-feeling, and I not daring to.

On that occasion he worked the mischief in silence, but on another his voice broke out in just those abnormal notes already alluded to. This time I was, in ordinary course of duty, down at the regimental riding schools, watching the drill of my squadron in several rides. Sitting quietly in the saddle, at a standstill, and in conversation with some native officers, I had just leant back to say something to one of them behind, lounging at my ease and with a hand on the cantle, an

attitude which ought by rights to have made a trained horse like mine want to go to sleep. On the contrary, he chose just this moment for one of his tantrums. With a sound as near a scream as I ever heard from a horse's throat, he gave one bound forward and doubled up in a semi-circle, pounding up and down in a mad desire to get me off his back. How it was he did not succeed at the first plunge, I know not. Perhaps I hung on instinctively to the cantle, and no doubt I was saved being dragged off when his head went down by the fact that the reins were hanging loose. Be the reason what it may, I was still in the saddle. But the entertainment was only just beginning, and, having survived the first round, I found myself as unwilling to alight from horseback as Montaigne. The horse made no attempt whatever to bolt. I doubt whether, during the whole struggle, he moved much more than his own length from the spot. Yet there was never a pause in those terrible buckings. Up and down, up and down, he heaved, with twistings and turnings, his head at moments almost looking backward between his knees, his forefeet striking out wildly. And all the time he kept up the most extraordinary grunts and squeals of rage. My one endeavour, of course, was to get his head up, but, tug and strain as I would, I made no impression. Let me cut a long story short. The horse won again. I just rolled off in the end from sheer exhaustion, though not before two of the reins had been broken, and the straps of the breastplate were in rags. The horse was breathing and sweating as if just off a hard gallop, and he seemed pretty well done too, though he did make one more determined effort to get rid of the saddle also, a feat which I once actually saw accomplished by a "Waler." He was then led (*not* ridden) home tattered, dishevelled, disreputable, but victorious. "Never again!" I said, and so we parted company for good and all.

I can recall another occasion on which, for the first and last time in my life, I heard horses utter screams of terror. It was at the

largest camp of exercise for cavalry and horse-artillery ever held in India, when the late Prince "Eddie" of Wales and Lord Roberts took the salute with thirteen strong regiments galloping in one line a mile and a half long, glittering with such a variety of uniforms as cannot be often brought together in one display. An exhibition of fireworks had been planned by way of doing honour to the occasion, and my own regiment was not lagging in preparations. Unfortunately, we had a most disappointing evening of rain, a sequel to an abnormally wet season. Indeed, the few hours of the big parade had been the only spell of "Queen's Weather" for some days, and now, as darkness fell, the rain came down as hard as ever, so all thought of pyrotechnics had to be abandoned. One enthusiast in my regiment, however, persuaded the others to try at any rate and get a few rockets off, and, after several fizzling failures, one really did go up and shot, screaming and flaming, right over the horse lines. This was greeted with a loud neigh, which betokened no unusual alarm at the moment, but which quickly swelled into a scream of terror, taken up from regiment to regiment, and becoming a veritable roar as it went along the whole line. It was an ominous and awful sound, and the men rushed to their horses, some none too soon, others, indeed, too late, for, as the picketting pegs had little hold in the sodden ground, the lines were soon one surging mass of terrified animals tugging and plunging at their pickets. Many had broken loose, and were dashing about madly and blindly in all directions, wrecking tents and overthrowing men in a pandemonium of confusion, made worse by the pitch darkness, drenching rain and ground like a swamp. Officers and men turned out with all the lanterns that could be mustered, and tried to recapture some of the missing horses, but their efforts proved for the most part unavailing.

When stock was taken next morning, my regiment alone had lost over a hundred horses, and it was easy to trace a number of them across a stream some twenty feet deep and wide, running lip-full at

the time. Marvellous to relate, we recovered every one; though a few had fled as far as Lahore, twenty miles distant, and were captured in the streets of the bazaar. Very few were injured; none seriously.

Wisdom comes in such mischances after the event, and, of course, the rockets ought in the circumstances to have been vetoed, and it is quite certain that none of those who heard that roar of terror would ever again attempt, or permit others to attempt, a similar freak. True, horses are capricious animals and might on a simular occasion take no notice, but the experiment is not one that can be recommended.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EXPERIENCE WITH LOCUSTS.

INDIA, among her many natural scourges, has fortunately not often, or seriously, to reckon with locusts. This is somewhat strange, as it would appear that the conditions there—ample heat and in some parts great extent of sandy desert in which to breed, with vast quantities of fine crops open to destruction—are very similar to those of some other lands—Africa, South America, and also other parts of Asia—where their devastations are so serious as to affect economic calculations. Yet the visitations are not so rare but that the natives are quick to recognize the peculiar cloud on the horizon which betokens approach of a flight, and to turn out with their tom-toms, aided in these latter days by kerosene oil tins, in the hope of scaring the enemy from their individual fields. A supremely futile expedient this, at least in the case of a real business invasion, but it is the rarity of the visitations which has prevented any study of modern methods of prevention.

So then, having no fields of my own, nor any interest even in a garden, I considered myself somewhat fortunate in once being witness of a flight which I think might well be described as a first-class one—something to remember and talk about—perhaps even worthy to be recorded in writing. On two occasions only, in my thirty years' service, had I seen locusts before, but these flights were insignificant, and little damage resulted, so the general impression left on my mind was that all the accounts of darkened skies and overwhelming devasta-

tion of which we had read were merely another instance of gross exaggeration. But my ideas were to be readjusted.

It was somewhere about 1890, and I was paying a few days' visit to a small station in the Punjab, not far from my own. It was the cold weather, and golf on a newly laid-out course was to be one of the amusements. This in itself was somewhat uncommon in India at the time, but far more novel entertainment was in store. It was the morning after arrival, as I recollect, and we were discussing the programme of the day.

"Surely it is not going to rain," said someone. "Look at that cloud."

And certainly we saw a cloud far away on the horizon. It looked quite natural though too brown perhaps, but that might be dust. And yet, as it expanded and spread over the sky, and seemed distinctly drawing nearer, it gave all the appearance of a coming storm of rain.

"But what is that just alighted on the path? And there is another on that bush. What huge grasshoppers!"

Then came a sound of flicking in the air and pattering on leaves of trees, and a sudden ominous burst of tom-tom music from the direction of the bazaar. We looked up, and then at each other, and "Locusts!" was the simultaneous word.

We picked up a few and examined them with interest. They were of a general reddish brown colour, with lighter wings, about a couple of inches long, and in shape just like a big grasshopper. Harmless enough they were to look at, nor as yet was there any great number of them, so that no feelings were inspired in us but those of curiosity. These, however, as we soon realised, were merely a few scouts—those which we had *not* seen in the cloud. This had meantime drawn nearer and expanded, covering the sky as far as one could see, and soon the scouts were followed by their companies, these also in proper extended formation. Then in quick succession came the battalions and brigades

and divisions closer order now—till within an hour the whole dense army corps was upon us and around us in all directions. The ground was covered, the trees were covered—they penetrated everywhere. The air was full of darkness—a darkness which could very literally be felt too, as the creatures blundered into one's face or bumped against hat and head.

"What about our golf now," we said.

"Oh, let us play, and blow the locusts! It will be another experience."

So we started, riding our ponies to the course, which was some way off. And that ride and the subsequent game were experiences not easily to be forgotten. My mount was a little Belooch mare, an excitable unit of a well-known excitable breed, and I had by no means calculated on her attitude towards the locusts. This she very soon revealed, and what with her flourish of heels and constantly trying in her canter with both fore feet at once to brush away the whirling pests from her nose and ears, I had as lively a time as I wanted, and indeed often felt very doubtful of arriving at our destination at all—at least on her back. Then came the game of golf, played as perhaps golf was never played before or since. We could not see half the length of a drive, far less to the next hole, and the ball when driven went pat patter among the flying crowd, hitting and stunning dozens in its flight, and finally disappearing altogether in the dense brown cloud. When, in time and with patience, we found the hole, the approach shot was not so hopeless, but on the putting green the difficulties reappeared. As soon as one lot were brushed away from the line more would alight or crawl on, till at last we had just to play and chance it. This was not good enough for long, and we gave it up and departed.

Of course it had been hoped that the locusts would pass on to pastures new, where local owners had no interest. But it soon became

apparent that this was not to be. Some may have done so, but this little station was really an oasis, and the bulk remained, settling contentedly and irresistibly everywhere—on the ground, on houses, on walks, and on trees. They chiefly sought trees, and next morning the sight was extraordinary. Having apparently devoured all they wanted during the night, the creatures had piled themselves so thickly on all horizontal branches—on the stouter ones to a depth of perhaps a couple of feet—that these were weighed down and bent to breaking point—in some cases they actually were broken ; while in cuttings on the railway they were so thick that trains were stopped owing to the wheels being unable to grip the rails through the grease of squashed bodies, and double engines had to be used.

As to damage done, I was distinctly surprised at the slightness of this. Certainly it was the cold season, and not the time for young crops or leaves. Many kinds of trees, however, were covered with mature foliage, and one would have thought these would be devoured, if only for want of something better. But it was not so, or only to a small extent. The insects seemed to have reached a stage of existence when quiescence was the order, and eating unnecessary. Probably many were already moribund, but they were by no means all so, for the remnant were seen to depart one day, disappearing as mysteriously as they had arrived.

This was my own experience, but the swarm on that occasion was apparently as nothing compared with that of a second visitation. This was in reality a sequel to the first, for it was believed to consist of the progeny of the departed locusts. It visited the same station in the following spring. Although I was not an eye-witness of this second invasion, the experiences were so different ,and the results so really disastrous that, having subsequently had fullest details from a witness, I feel that little apology is required for completing the story.

Like its predecesssor, this invasion was first seen from afar off on

the western horizon. It was not, however, in the air this time, as a cloud, but on the ground—a long dark line which, as watched, could be seen distinctly approaching. Nearer and nearer it came, very slowly, but very surely, expanding and broadening as it advanced, reminding the onlookers of a great dam of treacle which had burst its bounds. At first altogether mysterious, the phenomenon was soon recognized by some of the more experienced. It was the locusts in their wingless, crawling stage, and their appearance was known to forbode doom. What use of tom-toms now when the creatures were not capable of flying away? What use attempting to exterminate when the numbers were countless, and those behind would care nothing for the slaughter in front? Instinct told them they were advancing towards young crops and flowers and spring greenery, and nature would force them to get there at any cost. Had proper measures been taken *in time* perhaps something effectual might have been done. But the natives, ever prone to bow before the fates, soon gave way to despair, and sank in apathy. Not so the redoubtable Deputy Commissioner. He, also true to his caste and creed, all day, with his many myrmidons, continued heroic exertions to save the beautiful station gardens, lighting fires and slaying myriads with flails and branches. But it was all in vain, and at nightfall even he had to desist, utterly defeated. Very soon the devastation was complete. Cornfields were bare, and branches stripped of every leaf, not a green thing or flower to be seen where all had been fresh and smiling.

Nor did this end the plague. Many of the wells were choked with bodies of the dead, and produced an outbreak of cholera during the ensuing hot weather. So the appointed work was thoroughly done. Bible and other records were fully justified, and no scoffers were left in the little station of Jhelum.

To complete the tale, it should be stated that eventually this last swarm, what was left of them, took to themselves wings and disappeared,

travelling in the direction of the high Himalayas, where I myself came across many stragglers perishing on the snowy passes. Not much instinct, one may say, was apparent in this; but, after all, we may suppose that the last act also was a fulfilment of destiny. Whence the first cold weather flight came no man could say, but it was surmised that they, or a certain proportion, when they departed, betook themselves to the desert country west of Jhelum, there to lay their eggs, and hatch these and their nefarious project at the same time.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SILENCE OF THE JUNGLE.

TRAVELLERS and sportsmen often wax eloquent on the subject of the voices of the jungle, and I do not wish altogether to impugn their testimony. But I think the impression created is somewhat exaggerated. I, at least, have certainly often been struck with the very opposite—the silence. It is at night, of course, that the voices are chiefly in evidence, and no doubt certain animals are often heard—some kinds of deer, an occasional tiger or leopard, and in Africa there are the lions, loudest and most impressive of all. Nor can any who have had experience, whether in Asia or Africa, forget the unholy howl of the jackals. Yet in my experience, in India, with the exception of these last, the animal noises are as a matter of fact very occasional only, far less disturbing. I cannot recollect ever having been kept awake, for instance, by wild jungle cries, for the jackal chorus is usually over before the time when one wants to sleep. On the other hand, no sooner is one's camp moved back to the haunts of men, and one's tent pitched within ear-shot of a village, than sleep often becomes impossible. Then, indeed one is apt to be driven to desperation by the persistent barking—the more exasperating from its being intermittent and apparently unmeaning—of the pariah dogs, which seems to go on all night long, only to cease when one is finally and effectually roused from a belated snooze by the "cottage-rousing crow" of some too early cock.

This leads naturally to the more particular aspect of the question of the voices and the silence which I have now in view—a curious

subject of fact and speculation which I have not previously seen noticed.

We are all familiar with the voices of our common domestic animals—the strenuous bark of the dog, the lusty " moo " of the cow, the full-throated " baa " of the sheep, and the strident bray of the donkey—calculated to rend both ear and heart. But I think it may come as something of a surprise to many to be told that these voices are very conspicuously absent from the existing wild prototypes of all these animals, which, if not in some cases the actual ancestors, are yet so closely allied as to leave no doubt of very distinct family connection. No wolf, wild dog, jackal, or fox—the admitted and undoubted ancestors of our domestic breeds—barks in any of the various ways we know so well in our dogs. Wolves and jackals howl no doubt, and this faculty our dogs too have retained. Foxes certainly emit a modest little sound, which might be called a bark, but this is only the ghost of the performance of our domestic friends, while the " pheeal," immortalized by Kipling, of the wild red dog of Central India is nothing more, we may take it, than a weird chase cry, or howl like that of the jackal. Not one of these has the distinct bark—of anger or pleasure or mere wantonness—which is the characteristic of all our breeds of dog.

Again, no existing wild representative of our cattle is known to low—neither the bison, the buffalo, nor the yak. They do, notably the yak, make a sort of grunting sound, but even this is probably confined to the bulls, and in any case it can bear no comparison with the full-mouthed " moo " of our cows. As to the sheep, I have often, when lying watching them within easy ear-shot, had opportunity of hearing anything that wild flocks of more than one species might have to say ; but I never heard a sound—nothing but the note of alarm, half snort, half sneeze, which is not to be distinguished from that of any wild deer or goat. Others have certainly told me that they have heard low

"nichering" sounds pass between mothers and young, and this is likely enough. But none has ever heard the vociferous "baa" we know so well. With the wild donkeys of Tibet, too, I have had equal opportunities, and never heard a bray, or indeed other sound. At the same time in this case, I have been told, on no very certain authority, however, that the wild asses of Persia—a different species from the Tibetan—do occasionally give tongue.

One more instance may be given—that of our fowls—though this is not so apposite. The jungle-cocks do crow—in the very early morning, too—and the sound is hardly to be distinguished from that of our bantams. But I never heard a jungle hen make the fuss our domestic idiots do after laying an egg. Certainly I should have gone for the nest had I ever heard the clamour.

It is easy to recognize this refraining from advertisement as a wise natural precaution calculated to insure the survival of the fittest and wisest. We may fitly explain, too, the general silence of all the others, be they beasts of prey or the preyed upon, on the same principle. Silence would be discreet in both cases. But the difficulty and the marvel is, why so many of our domestic animals should have acquired such strident voices through association with man.

Of course, the whole speculation would be discounted were we to refuse to accept existing wild types as ancestors, and the case of the cattle is the weakest in this respect. But in that of the others the existing animals are in all essentials so similar to our domestic breeds as to leave no reasonable doubt that there is at least the closest connection, while actual descent is, in fact, generally accepted. It would seem therefore that we must accept the phenomenon as yet one more of those things which we do not understand.

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